ABSTRACT

REACHING OUT TO THE COMMUNITY WITH THE HIWASSEE RIVER
WATERSHED COALITION

by Jacob Stone

This practicum was completed as a requirement to complete my Master of Environmental Science and Sustainability degree with a concentration in Environmental communication. It offers an evaluation of real-world impacts of outreach work I completed on behalf of the Hiwassee River Watershed Coalition (HRWC) between April and December of 2012. This evaluation is intended to culminate in such a way that it will serve as a useful reference not only for the HRWC program implementers, but also their board of trustees, and other similar organizations. This work allows the coalition to make informed decisions when it comes to outreach priorities for many years to come and materials such as flyers and reports produced during the duration of this practicum will continue to aid the HRWC in its outreach efforts.
REACHING OUT TO THE COMMUNITY WITH THE HIWASSEE RIVER
WATERSHED COALITION

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by
Jacob David Stone
Miami University
Oxford, Ohio
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Major Advisor_______________________
(Dr. Michelle Simmons)

Committee Member_______________________
(Dr. Donna McCollum)

Committee Member_______________________
(Professor Annie-Laurie Blair)
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Executive Summary

The ultimate goal of this practicum is to produce a report that will serve as a useful reference not only for the HRWC program implementers, but also the HRWC board of trustees allowing them to make informed decisions when it comes to outreach priorities. My work with the HRWC includes documents and materials made for the purpose of increasing outreach efforts and effectiveness. These materials produced during the duration of this practicum continue to aid the HRWC in its outreach efforts. This practicum report fulfills my professional experience requirement in my Master of Environmental Science degree with a concentration in environmental communication and outreach. Completing this work has given me hands-on experience assisting in planning community outreach programs, which readily correlates with this concentration.

I was first introduced to the Hiawassee River Watershed Coalition (HRWC) as an undergraduate at Young Harris College in Towns County, Georgia. The HRWC is a non-governmental, conservation, non-profit organization that operates within Northern Georgia and North Carolina. It has been working for over 20 years to carry out its mission to facilitate water quality improvements within the Hiawassee River watershed. It works to complete this mission through water quality education and voluntary restoration projects with the help of community members and government agencies. The organization is completely funded by membership donations, local funding, and grants.

Increasing membership and participation rates is of high importance to the HRWC because of increasing stressful financial burdens placed on the organization as a result of a slow economy and a scarce amount of grant funding. In addition, research shows that membership in a non-governmental organization (NGO) like the HRWC cannot only provide fiscal support for the organization, but also serve to strengthen civil society by directly involving community members in maintaining the region they live in (Hulme & Edwards, 1992). For this reason, this practicum works to continue to help the HRWC
develop their membership base and outreach in order to increase the longevity of the organization. This work was based off knowledge from my coursework, as well as my understanding of Community Based Social Marketing (McKenzie-Mohr, 2000).

Facebook insight data showed us that in general more individuals were seeing the HRWC’s page and people were interacting more with the HRWC’s through this social media. This data was evaluated with moving average and time series analysis where appropriate and informed many of the final recommendations laid out by this report. As the Coalition continues to pursue community outreach it should remember to, wherever possible, continually assess the effectiveness of its programs and continue to try new and innovative outreach practices.
Chapter I: Background

As a requirement to complete my Master of Environmental Science and Sustainability degree, I did a practicum project with the Hiwassee River Watershed Coalition (HRWC). The purpose of this practicum was to build organizational outreach in the community, and consequently increase membership, fundraising and awareness. As a result of this practicum project, the Coalition has increased community involvement through social media and organizational events like fundraisers. This report covers my work and associated impacts between April and December of 2012, and it is intended to be a reference for their future outreach efforts.

About the HRWC

The HRWC is a non-governmental organization that works to protect a watershed spanning Georgia, Tennessee and North Carolina. The Coalition originated in a grassroots movement of local farmers and fisherman in response to declining numbers of trout within the watershed. These individuals worked together to help resolve the issues within the watershed, rather than rely on local governments. This grassroots movement evolved into the HRWC of today. Over the past ten years, the HRWC has formally worked with both the private and public sector to better manage the watershed. Much like in the past, the organization continues to play an important role helping to

Figure 1: The Hiwassee River Watershed. Image courtesy of the HRWC.
manage the entire watershed that would otherwise fall under the jurisdiction of four separate counties.

The mission of the HRWC is to facilitate water quality improvements in lakes and streams through the upper Hiwassee River Watershed. To accomplish this, the HRWC functions primarily through four major program areas:

1. **Watershed Restoration.** This includes programs that work directly with land owners, community members and community partners to physically restore deteriorating waterways. This program area varies widely in scope, with projects that range from volunteer days to million-dollar restorations. The two largest of these programs make up more than four million dollars of programmatic spending in the lifetime of the HRWC.

2. **Lake and Watershed Planning.** These programs have been producing formal documentation and recommendations for the watershed as a whole, as well as the four lake systems (Lake Chatuge, Lake Nottely, Lake Hiwassee and Lake Apalacia) found in the watershed. Most recently, this program completed a four-year Lake Chatuge Watershed Action Plan. This plan received grant funding to hire a full time watershed coordinator for Lake Chatuge as well as to fund future lake improvement programs.

3. **Volunteer Opportunities.** Volunteer programs within the watershed work to get the public involved and informed about the importance of watershed health. More often than not, the volunteer programs also complement the educational directive of the Coalition. This is because individuals get one-on-one, hands-on experience learning aspects of watershed management practices.

4. **Education Programs.** Programs are offered year round for students 4th grade through the college level. These include indoor and outdoor classes, summer day camps, conservation “field days,” programs for civic groups, as well as community water and watershed courses. An example of an educational program would be the Creative Recreational & Environmental Education for Kids (C.R.E.E.K.) summer camp program. Such programs also second as volunteer opportunities for the members of the Coalition.
Who is Involved
The HRWC currently has a paid staff of five: a director, a restoration coordinator, an administrative and outreach coordinator, a grants accountant, and a watershed coordinator for Lake Chatuge. Its board of directors is comprised of representatives from multiple Soil and Water Conservation Districts, County Commissioners, as well as community members.

The Coalition has held membership levels around 140 renewing households over the past four years. It normally retains about 115 households and attracts about 20 to 30 new memberships per year.

Funding and Membership
As a non-profit organization, the HRWC is completely supported by funds received through membership dues, donations, local funding and grants. In the past, the bulk of these operational funds came from grants, but in recent years this funding has become harder and harder to obtain. For this reason, the HRWC has been working to grow its membership and fundraising programs. Doing so will hopefully help to secure long-term fiscal security for the Coalition while increasing community impact. Some programs the HRWC currently executes include rotating fundraisers – such as Texas Hold’em tournaments and wine tastings at local vineyards – as well as recurring events like the fall Trout Dinner, which is a large fundraising dinner that ends in a meeting describing current Coalition affairs.

Existing Outreach
The coalition currently has a small budget for outreach and the vast majority of outreach programs are managed by the Director. While the HRWC has had a Facebook page set up since 2010, it was usually only used periodically when there was time. Previously, outreach strategies had primarily relied on word of mouth and press releases. These programs have most recently included efforts such as: personalized letters to friends and family from members, phone calls to renewing members and mailings (Coalition, 2012). While these programs have been effective, organization leaders feel as though these methods have been taxed to their limits.
The Move to the City of Murphy

The HRWC faced a large fiscal crisis in 2012, which greatly impacted existing outreach and its ability to implement new strategies. The culmination of the fiscal recession and shrinking grant availability, especially the loss of Tennessee Valley Authority operational support, led to a large leftover restoration debt. This resulted in a negative operating balance for the Coalition. If unresolved, this would have crippled the HRWC’s operations. To address this fiscal crisis, Coalition officials developed a new budget plan during May and June. This budget included cuts to operational funding, staffing hours and overhead costs associated with moving office locations to the city of Murphy. On June 19th, the new budget approved by the board of trustees.

The effort required to solve the financial crisis has monopolized the time and resources of the HRWC. Thus, this move inadvertently affected the feasibility of implementing large-scale outreach efforts during the course of my work with the Coalition. Thankfully, the fiscal crisis has been largely resolved by the revised budget passed for the last quarter of 2012 and the HRWC will resume previous staffing levels starting January 1st of 2013. At this time, the HRWC plans to implement additional outreach efforts outlined by my plans.

Synopsis

The Hiwassee River Watershed Coalition is a non-profit organization that has been working with the communities within the watershed since the late 1990s. HRWC relies on grant funding and financial support from its members to facilitate water quality improvements throughout the Hiwassee River Watershed. The HRWC has determined that increased community membership and participation will be of great importance to the long-term survival of the organization as it continues to grow. This prerogative will not only allow for greater community impact, but also will increase financial security as a result of increased membership and fundraising yields. For this reason, this report and its corresponding material projects work to give the HRWC a strong start in growing its outreach and membership programs.

I first became involved with the Coalition through my ecology class at Young Harris College participating in stream restoration projects. As time passed, I became even more
involved with the HRWC as I worked toward my bachelor degree by facilitating and participating in additional volunteer opportunities through my other campus organizations. The HRWC became an important organization to me not only because of its ability to give my organizations the volunteer hours needed to remain active on campus but also because its mission spoke to me.

Most recently, my role at the coalition was to generate the outreach plans and materials that offered the insight necessary to achieve more effective outreach. Overall, these outreach plans and materials worked together to help the Coalition increase membership and community participation. My concentration within the Miami University IES master’s program in environmental communication and outreach works to marry the science and understanding of the natural world to communication. This is for the purposes of raising community awareness about our natural world and our impact on it in an effort to foster participation in environmental initiatives. This practicum offered me an opportunity to impact real-world outreach work done by the HRWC as a final culmination of my degree.
Chapter II: Academic Context Around Outreach

While working with the Coalition to achieve the goal of greater community outreach I drew on many academic sources to generate my outreach plans. Because the work was done over an eight-month period, while I was repeatedly exposed to new research through classroom experience and independent research, I continually improved my approach to working with the coalition. The following chapter lays out a background for the three major genres of research that I drew on for the majority of my work: Community Based Social Marketing and the impact of involvement, Organizational Culture and Social Capital Theory, and finally the various elements of effective design. These areas of research directly affected the recommendations for the Coalition because they increased the effectiveness of programs by informing the development of outreach efforts.

Community Based Social Marketing (CBSM)
Doug McKenzie-Mohr consolidates extensive marketing research to build CBSM, a unique marketing methodology based on social marketing, for the express purpose of fostering sustainable behavior. CBSM directly applies to the Coalition because, in effect, we were looking to change the behavior of participation in the coalition’s suitability centric efforts. The method concentrated on key behaviors that the client would like to see changed in a population and then investigates barriers and benefits associated with that behavior. Once these benefits and barriers have been identified, program elements are developed by incorporating strategies outlined by the method. These strategies are as follows:

- **Commitment**- When a person commits in word or writing to something, they are much more likely to participate in the behavior when it comes time to act.
- **Social Norms**- People are more likely to participate in a behavior if it is seen to be standard action amongst their community.
- Social Diffusion- New persons are more likely to participate in a behavior if it has already been adopted by another community member (especially when they are friends or family).
- Prompts- Small reminders placed in such a way that the person in question is reminded of the behavior, bringing it to the forefront of the mind, when it comes time to act.
- Communication- The way you send a message and the tone associated with it can greatly hinder or advance the adoption of the behavior.
- Incentives- Rewarding those who adopt the behavior can be a strong motivating force, but only when used effectively do they yield long-term results.
- Convenience- When a behavior is easy to do; it is much more likely to be done.

Once recommendations have been formulated through the marketing strategies, they are assembled into cohesive marketing packages for piloting. Piloting this marketing mix will give the Coalition an idea of anticipated impacts the developed program will have within a community. This method will let the HRWC know if large-scale implementation is the next logical step (McKenzie-Mohr, 2011).

**Organizational Culture Theory and the idea of Social Capital and Engagement**

Interaction and exploration are two interface elements of social media that sites like Facebook thrive from (Wysocki & Jasken, 2004). They offer the user the opportunity to not only physically interact with the page but also become psychologically interactive within the context of participating by commenting and sharing (Manovich, 2001), and recently we have begun to see this behavior grow (Manovich, 2009). These aspects, when used correctly, can create an online environment that users will want to return too. If an organization, like the HRWC, is able to create and maintain an environment that users will want to return to through these principles, then they should be able to start building up an organizational culture through that interaction.

Organizational culture is a broad category of communication theory that strives to describe how and why persons remain involved. Such culture is built slowly over time
through interaction and participation and can lead to increased organizational efficiency (Wilkins & Ouchi, 1983) and member retention (Rashid & Raja, 2011). This culture builds off a shared understanding of organizational character that reflects its values, symbols, and activities within the organization (Pettigrew, 1979). In short, encouraging programs that build on these aspects within the HRWC will in return strengthen the organization overall by encouraging sustained involvement in Coalition efforts.

Additionally, organizational cultures strengthen an organization through its activities and increased levels of social interaction. When examining social media environments, Lin and Lu propose the model of social capital which explains this phenomenon. Social capital states that increased interaction leads to a shared value and trust between organization members, which all contribute to the continued participation in the organization (Lin & Lu, 2011). In order to foster this engagement and build culture within the Facebook HRWC community, many outreach ideas were adapted from online social media blogs -- like taking and tagging photos of persons involved in the Coalition.

Design

Toward the end of my time working with the Coalition for this practicum I began making various graphic products. Much of these products were designed with purpose through the various elements laid out by Robin Williams in *The Non-Designer’s Design Book*. These elements of design include but are not limited to the following:

- **Proximity**- States that objects which are closer together fall into the same ideological frame. Through this, we would see items like time and date together, whereas health information pertaining to only males would not be found near similar information for females.
Alignment- Cohesive text alignment styles throughout a document helps to create a sense of flow and belonging even when text is isolated in different locations on the page. Allowing multiple alignment styles in a single document can create a messy feel that is off putting to the viewer.

Repetition- Patterns in content and/or design can generate cohesiveness and convey similarity. When looking at a flyer for the Coalition, certain elements like the web address of the Facebook page can always be found in the same place. This allows for easy recall of where to find this information if the individual should want too.

Color- Color can convey importance as well as tone or emotion. For example bright yellows and reds in fast food restaurants can instill a sense of urgency to eat and go, whereas sit down restaurants often use more mellow tones and colors like navy blue and forest green to encourage customers to stay and relax.

Font- Font choice not only impacts the ease of reading but can also make a significant impact on the way the intended message is interpreted in regard to seriousness in tone. For example some fonts, while more easy to read, can be thought to be less serious than others.

Contrast- The differences we see between design elements like colors, fonts, and alignment, as well as the severity of that difference makes up the concept of contrast. Contrasting design elements are often used to queue the viewer into the idea that they may be looking at conceptually different content or content that is more or less important. The much larger, often different font, title text found above newspaper articles are a good example of using contrast to differentiate between story text and summary headings (Williams, 2008).

These elements of design, as well as design principles gained through classroom experience, were driving factors behind decision making when developing promotional materials for the Coalition.

Closing
While my work was not approached through one these academic lenses specifically, they influenced and benefited this body of work throughout its development. Many aspects of
CBSM were worked into preexisting programs like getting RSVP commitments to volunteer events and avoiding negative aspects of programs by focusing on benefits that come from it. My recommendations drove the HRWC to build higher levels of interaction with its users through Facebook and documents designed for use by the Coalition were made with propose and effective design.
Chapter III: Recommendations and Implemented Strategies

Over the past 10 months, I have done a variety of work for the HRWC with the goal of increasing outreach, participation, and membership with the Coalition. My responsibilities included generating projects, reports and documents for the HRWC. This chapter takes a look at the reasoning and background behind each project that helped to reach this goal as well the time frame in which each was implemented (see appendices for full reports). To best assess impact that these projects have had, this chapter will describe when and how outreach initiatives changed throughout my time working with the Coalition. These projects will be broken up into two major sections: online initiatives and print projects.

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<td>Facebook recommendations</td>
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<td>Facebook advertising</td>
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<td>Interview content and video</td>
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Table 1: Projects completed with rough implementation time frame indicated by color.

Online and Social Media

First and foremost, the Coalition emphasized social media aspects of this practicum because officials saw social media as a mostly untapped potential source of outreach. The HRWC had gone as far as to make a Facebook page, but had until recently only used it sparingly. In the social media marketing plan I created for the HRWC, I made recommendations and changes to the existing HRWC Facebook page to maximize the page’s usability and reach. As the Facebook page was already created when I first started working with the Coalition, many of these recommended strategies were implemented immediately because they are for the most part easy to implement.
These first changes, made at the start of my time working with the Coalition, included changing the tab structure at the header of the Facebook page. This change in layout built off design principles mentioned in Chapter 2 and Kurg’s first law of web design -- design with obvious intent so that users find their experience interacting with your site more natural and intuitive (2006). Originally the e-news app link from “Constant Contact,” the company that provides the Coalition’s mass email service, had a generic blue box image. I changed this generic blue box to “Sign up for E-news” with a corresponding image icon. In addition, the icons were rearranged to show the most important ones to users so that number of ‘likes,’ an icon with little importance to users, was placed in the expandable line. This also followed principles of good design by reducing noise on the page and making more useful content more prominent (Kurg, 2006).

In addition to these design changes, I recommended that the Coalition follow the previously discussed idea that quality outweighs quantity when it comes to posting on Facebook. This decision was influenced by Anum Hussain’s article on the diminishing nature of a status update’s lifespan (2011). Because the Coalition does not have the staff needed to generate posts multiple times a day, it was important also to focus on when posts had the most effective reach. For this reason, I also recommended that the HRWC pay close attention to how the time and day of week affects the reach of each post made on the Facebook page. Devon Burke’s article on timing Facebook posts was presented as a starting point from which to work (2011). This information was used to tweak what time works best for reaching the Coalition’s audience.
In order to build off of Wysocki’s framework of interactivity and emotional connection (2004); I also recommended that the Coalition capture and tag photos with persons associated with the watershed. Taking pictures and tagging them has helped to increase the overall exposure of the HRWC in a viral manner to friends of friends through their newsfeeds. In addition to taking pictures, in order to increase viral reach, the Coalition has encouraged members to play a more active role on the Facebook page by tagging photos, sharing content, and commenting on statuses and photos. These recommendations on content and timing of posting as well as using photos as a tool to increase viral reach were implemented toward the beginning of my work with the Coalition.

Studies have shown that location-specific advertising has been effective in increasing brand awareness at a basic level while improving perceived effectiveness of the advertisements due to increased relevance to the consumer (Ateljevič & Martin, 2011). For this reason, paid Facebook advertising was recommended as a means to advertise more specifically to the HRWC’s target market. Facebook’s advanced demographic targeting was suggested to create advertisements for fundraising events that were specifically targeted to potential members by location, age, and interests. This was implemented for the HRWC’s annual trout dinner meeting and fundraiser.

Using Facebook as a way to coordinate events through the Coalition’s events page has been becoming a powerful tool for event planning (Zuhair KhanSirkka, 2010). For this reason, it was stressed to the Coalition that Facebook be used in addition to its newsletters, word of mouth, and website to increase event visibility. Using Facebook events not only increases exposure to members but also has the added potential to be seen by their Facebook Friends. In addition to increased exposure, Facebook also reminds users about upcoming events as they draw near and even sends out notifications to those users who RSVP to the event.

Bringing the user into the world of the Coalition can be a powerful aspect that can impact participation and interaction within a Facebook page (Alex, 2010). Video blogging is one way that increased participation and interaction can be accomplished. Video micro blogs have been utilized by brands like Burberry to give a personal touch to
its Facebook page and are a recommended addition to increase any pages fan base (Jeanjean, 2012). My marketing plan recommended following this example and as of this report the HRWC has videos made for this purpose with the intention to post them in the near future.

The social media marketing plan prepared for the HRWC also outlined the need for creating a blog and changing the HRWC website. Having a blog would allow the Coalition to post news and information in a live and streaming manner that could reach its audience in complement to the e-newsletter. The blog would not only present information in a smaller and more manageable way, but also give the Coalition an addition outreach outlet that benefits the Coalition because individuals can become discouraged from participating or contributing to the Coalition if they perceive the problems to be too big for them to make a difference (Kristof, 2009).

This blog and the changes to the HRWC’s website would work to build social capital for the organization and increase engagement of individual but, due to the staffing constraints associated with the move to Murphy, the blog recommendations have not been implemented to date. However, the HRWC plans to implement the blog starting in January 2014 when staffing levels return to normal.

General changes to the layout of the webpage were recommended based on the web style guide that states users generally look for major site elements such as navigation in specific locations (Patrick J. Lynch, 2008)(Figure 3). Additionally, a blog and social media feed were recommended to display the most recent news from the HRWC without having the burden of physically updating the page with new news. Doing so would lower website maintenance while increasing sites interactivity by linking it to the Coalition’s social media pages. This
addition should stimulate additional interest and desire to explore more content which in turn increases the viewer’s overall experience (Manovich, 2001). The Coalition plans to revamp its website in the future when funding for a redesign becomes available.

**Offline**

Outside of my work with social media and online content, I have produced many other materials and recommendations for the HRWC. Much of this work is based on my experience with Doug McKenzie-Mohr’s Community Based Social Marketing (or CBSM) methods (McKenzie-Mohr, 2011). This method calls for an organization to set a specific goal and achieve the goal by minimizing barriers and maximizing benefits to that behavior through specific strategies (McKenzie-Mohr, 2011). CBSM has been used in many different situations, such as increasing public participation in a small community recycling program (Haldeman & Turner, 2009). For this project it was applied to increasing membership and community involvement. The content of these materials were based on recommendations from CBSM and included: handouts to be passed out in areas around active restoration projects intended to inform the community and invite them to participate; flyers to be posted in local shops to increase awareness and interest; and a pamphlet to inform members on how they can help promote the HRWC on Facebook.

The handout was created to encourage individuals to become involved and participate in volunteer opportunities offered by the HRWC. This effort is intended to get more people hands on and participating. While working in a convenient area, being where they live, which would hopefully lead to continued involvement after learning more about the Coalition. The 8.5 by 5.5 inch handout would be distributed to homes immediately around a volunteer site a few weeks before the event happens and outlines what the Coalition will be doing, where it will be doing it, how to RSVP for the event, and how this project benefits their community. This information greatly increases the convenience, one of CBSM’s major strategies, of becoming involved with HRWC by giving individuals a chance to become involved directly by volunteering their time on a project close to home (McKenzie-Mohr, 2011).
To help increase brand awareness, simple flyers with the HRWC’s mission and website address were created. These 8.5 x 14 inch flyers are to be printed and distributed over the span of the watershed in coffee shops, grocery stores, and other public venues with community boards in them. The general theme of the flyers is to encourage involvement in the HRWC and also increase its brand awareness. Multiple versions of this flyer were requested, since individuals may be seeing more that one of these flyers around their town. Posting more than one flyer design will increase the novelty of the flyers and make a greater mental impact on the individual by putting the HRWC in the forefront of their mind. However, flyer layout remained very cohesive throughout all designs in order to maximize recognition despite changing backgrounds and colors. According to Konecnik and Gartner, building such awareness is one of the first steps in generating overall brand equity with an individual (2007). Thus increasing the overall awareness of the HRWC will hopefully then make individuals more willing to investigate what the Coalition does. The flyers will hopefully help advance the ultimate goal of getting more individuals involved in the HRWC Facebook page and the organization as a whole.

A trifold pamphlet of ways that individuals can help promote the HRWC on Facebook was created specifically because of the number of personal requests by members for information on ways to help promote the Coalition. Because the Coalition’s membership base is primarily older individuals they, in turn, have a high prevalence of social media ‘inactives’ and ‘spectators’ (Incoporated, 2011). These are individuals that do not often check social media sites, and if they do, they do not often interact to a high degree (figure 5). This

Figure 5: Forrester’s Social Technographics Ladder. This figure displays the breakdown of each potential social media role an individual within a community may develop and traits that each role exhibits (2011).
pamphlet directly minimizes the knowledge barriers associated with using Facebook and, in effect, will help push individuals to participate on the HRWC’s Facebook page at a higher technographic level (figure 5) by showing them what kind of things they can do as fans of the Coalition to help maximize the its reach.

Lastly, I created a list of recommended strategies for the HRWC to help increase membership, fundraising event participation and volunteer participation. These strategies were loosely developed from CBSM’s strategy archetypes. Some of these strategies include: the formation of the Gift-A-Ticket program, in which members can get additional tickets to give to non-member friends or family at a steeply discounted rate; participation and presence at community events, such as farmer’s markets; and personal invitations and free tickets for key community members to events. For the most part, due to staffing constraints, only the Gift-A-Ticket program has been implemented at this time. The other offline materials and recommendations will be phased in fully starting in 2013.

Conclusions
Overall the materials and recommendations made for the Coalition should work as a whole to reach the goal of increased outreach through multiple fronts. Once fully implemented, both online and offline efforts should work together to increase brand recognition and encourage people to participate. In time, hopefully this increase in recognition and participation will lead to the goal of higher membership and donation rates to the HRWC.
Chapter IV: Assessment of Impact

In this chapter I measure and assess anticipated impact vs. observed changes as well as general trends that my work with the HRWC has had. This assessment will focus on Facebook insight data spanning the time I worked with the Coalition. Additionally, I will address if the goals of the social media marketing plan were achieved. I will also look at specific moments of trial and triumph in terms of Facebook user involvement. Finally, the section will close by talking about qualitative assessments of other outreach efforts by the HRWC.

Understanding Facebook Metrics

Assessing Facebook impacts and other social media can be problematic -- especially because it is virtually impossible to find a metric that accurately represents a measure of impact. This stems from the fact that Facebook fans are typically already heavily involved with a brand before they join their Facebook page (Nelson-Field, Riebe, & Sharp, 2012). For this reason, assessments have to look at more than just the number of fans, stories and ‘likes,’ and instead look into what attitudes, behaviors, and content surround these metrics (LaPointe, 2012). The following trends are summary statistics generated by Facebook’s insight applet available to page admins. For this project engagement metrics, page impressions, as well as reach were assessed.

The key engagement metrics evaluated include:

- Number of ‘Likes’: number of users that subscribe to the HRWC page
- Number of ‘People Talking About This’: which is how many people are commenting and sharing HRWC materials of both posts and photos
- Number of ‘page stories’: reflects how many stories were generated to be placed in various newsfeeds that include the HRWC or its content
- ‘Engagement’: shows how many stories were made and how many times HRWC content has been clicked.

The number of impressions that the HRWC has made reflects how many times a post, photo, or other content from the Coalition’s Facebook page is seen in any person’s news feed, update ticker, or on the page itself. This is a representation of about how many
times people are exposed to the HRWC’s page each month. Specifically, this metric is a 28-day moving sum, which means if you see a metric value of 100 page impressions a particular day, it means there were 100 pages impressions total in the past 28 days. Additionally, this statistic would read 28 if one person were to see the page every day for 28 day or if 28 people saw the page all in one day during the same period. Using this running sum data helps to eliminate extreme changes and outliers, and shows more clearly general trends in the data.

In addition to this, both organic and viral impression show us any time content from the HRWC’s Facebook page is seen in a news feed or update ticker. Organic and viral reach tells us how many different people see content from the HRWC’s page. Thus in a single day, an individual might see 10 or more things from the HRWC’s page, which generates 10 impressions and in the same day be counted as reaching one person. Organic metrics are when posts are seen by individuals who have already ‘liked’ the HRWC’s page and see posted content naturally. Viral metrics result from stories generated about people liking, commenting on, and sharing HRWC’s content. For example, a viral impression would result from the following: The HRWC posts a photo, Janet sees the photo on the HRWC page and ‘likes’ it. Brad, Janet’s fiancé, sees that Janet ‘likes’ the HRWC’s photo in his news feed. While we cannot say for sure that Brad is not also already a fan of the HRWC, we can be fairly confident that many of Janet’s friends who may see that she ‘liked’ our photo will not be.

While we often think that ‘more is always better,’ it is important to understand what each of these metrics translates to the real world. Just because you have more ‘Likes’ does not mean that users are actually interacting with the page (Platt, 2012). In a way, we can look at organic metrics as an insight to how involved users actually may be. Organic metrics shows the amount of impact that content on our page has directly on our page’s fans. Viral metrics could be seen as community outreach as these impressions are more likely to be made mainly on ‘friends of friends’ who are not currently fans of the page. The goal of the Coalition’s Facebook page is to increase the engagement of its fans and, in doing so, hopefully increase outreach through these viral impressions.
**Major Trends**

When looking at the data presented in the graphs below, there are a few distinct trends that emerge (Figures 6-8). First and foremost we can see that the HRWC’s Facebook page has gone from 126 total ‘likes’ to 195 just from May 1st to December 1st which overshot the original goal by 29 additional ‘likes’ (Figure 6). In addition, all of the other metrics have shown an overall positive trend. This suggests that the Facebook page has been steadily growing and expanding in terms of user interaction.

On another positive note, there is a distinct surge in reach, impressions, engaged users, and page stories that coincides with the month of August. The surge in activity, and the month-long lull that precedes it, is most likely a result of the Coalition’s move to its new Murphy office (Figure 6). This trend could be attributed to the completion of the move. At this point the HRWC would then be able to re-concentrate their efforts on outreach as well as other programs.

The surge and, even more importantly, the increase in gap between engaged users and Page stories, indicates that more people are interacting with the Facebook page (Figure 6). This increase in interaction tells us that during August and September, users were clicking on HRWC content to view photos or read additional information often. The gap observed here may be related in part to the fact that these months were packed with events, contests, and activities that coalition members were attending. Lastly, in October we see a reduction in viral impact of the Coalition’s Facebook page, which can be mostly attributed to a 13-day period of no new content postings from the 4th to the 17th (Figure 7 & 8).
Figure 6: Shows 28-day running statistics for the number of stories generated by the HRWC page, number of people ‘talking about this’ (the number of persons commenting and sharing), engaged users (the total number of people liking, commenting, and sharing).

Figure 7: 28-day running statistics for the organic, viral and total number of page impressions made by the HRWC Facebook page.
Insight to Success

One insight to a successful tactic for increasing engagement and viral comes from the photo post about the Creative Recreational & Environmental Education for Kids (C.R.E.E.K.) program, which is a free educational summer camp for students in grades 6 to 8. This post generated a reach of over 400, three fourths of which was viral. The boost in viral reach was accomplished by the high number of user ‘likes’ and comments, which allowed the post to generate many additional stories on other individuals’ news feeds. Comments on these photos indicate the higher level of user interaction that drives additional page engagement. The post about the C.R.E.E.K. program indicates that persons may be more motivated to interact with content containing friends and family.

Another metric offered by Facebook insight data is ‘negative feedback’. When any user on Facebook “hides” posts or stories made by the HRWC, ‘negative feedback’ is generated. The Coalition received more than one negative feedback on the following dates: 8/22, 9/27, 11/6, and 11/10. These are associated with the following content: The Georgia Adopt-A-Stream photo album, the photo tour of Nottely River, and the
reminder of the Lake Chatuge cleanup. Unfortunately, Facebook offers no specific post for 11/10 but there were four posts throughout that day all about the Chatuge cleanup.

**Facebook Summary**

Overall the HRWC’s Facebook page has generally experienced growth in both number of likes and reach. This could be an indication that the changes made to the structure and management of the page have been more effective than previous efforts. While these trends of increased engagement do not necessarily correlate to increased membership, it is the Coalition’s hope is that this increased activity will work to raise organizational awareness and over time result in increased membership.

**Other Measures of Impact**

In addition to working on Facebook outreach I was responsible for developing outreach plans and materials to bolster traditional outreach efforts. The impacts of these have been harder to quantify than that of Facebook. The difficulty stems from the fact that this assessment was to be primarily based on results of the Trout Dinner Fundraiser, which is one of the largest fundraisers held each year. This year HRWC staff suspect that the fundraiser was attended poorly because of the decision to have the same price for advanced tickets as well as at door tickets, in combination with dismal weather at an outdoor venue. This combination reduced the number of individuals that preordered their tickets to begin with, and likely deterred normal participants from coming out in the cold rain to the event.

However, the director of the coalition has stated that while the numbers for its trout dinner fundraiser were down this year, she personally believes that it was more successful in reaching out to new people. She reported that two brand new couples attended the fundraiser because of the Facebook advertisement, in addition to the new faces that the Gift-A-Ticket program brought (Chapter III). Overall membership and donations are already at an all-time high this year, but this could be attributed to a surge in membership donations that occurred in the same quarter as a personal letter campaign lead by the executive board.
Chapter V: Recommendations

So far, the Hiawassee River Watershed Coalition (HRWC) has a strong start—already having a solid membership base and growing Facebook reach. This chapter takes the experience and knowledge I have gained throughout this practicum and puts it towards a final list of recommended to help reach the goal of even further improved future outreach efforts. These final improvements should begin by looking at the original recommendations which are still awaiting implementation (Chapter III). As mentioned in Chapter III, many of these recommendations were not yet implemented due to staffing restraints that resulted from the move to Murphy. The new recommendations will be divided into those specific to Facebook and recommendations outside of Facebook.

Facebook

Increased Facebook reach and interaction can increase participation and hopefully membership in an organization. The HRWC has already started many positive trends on Facebook and should now concentrate on keeping that momentum. This may be accomplished by first addressing the negative feedback HRWC received. Because the negative feedback was associated with days in which multiple Facebook posts were made, which were in some cases even about the same topic, it may be addressed by regulating posting frequency and focusing on a positive framing. Anum Hussain emphasizes that effective Facebook post management calls for “strategically posting remarkable content” (2011). While posting more than once a day is a generally accepted practice, the overall frequency of posts depends on our specific audience and its size (Galle, 2012). Because having a stagnant Facebook page can be detrimental, providing new content on a fairly consistent basis will be key (Falls, 2008). For this reason, I think that the HRWC should focus on posting consistently, around once daily, instead of having some days with more than one post and others with none.

In addition to this, focus on positive messages and words. While the potential negative impacts of harming the environment can stir some people to action, most do not like to be confronted with negativity (Enthusiasm Sells! Marketing With A Positive Attitude, 2011). Ensuring positive messaging ranges from the small things like using negative
words to large ideas. Westward Strategy warns that phrases like “don’t forget” and “Don’t wait” easily slip out in our marketing messages and carry a undesirable tone with them (2007). Along the same idea, McKenzie-Mohr writes about how topics played to the positives prompt a greater number of people to participate (2011) which means striving to talk about the good that comes from projects rather than correcting the bad.

From the standpoint of Social Capital Theory, which states that as a person interacts with a brand they become more committed to that brand, increased reach and activity on the HRWC’s Facebook page can equate to increased trust and shared value amongst members (Lin & Lu, 2011). This building of trust and shared value means that hopefully as people interact with the Coalition via social media, they will in time want to continue to interact on and off line. To achieve this higher level of interaction, I recommend encouraging exploration and interaction through showcasing existing Coalition content while increasing reach by having ‘Like and Share’ contests. The HRWC already has a wealth of preexisting content on various watershed related topics available online, and this information should be shared periodically on Facebook. In effect, sharing such information on watershed topics could help to build on the symbols, and eventually values, of those participating in the organization (Hofstede, Neuijen, Ohayv, & Sanders, 1990).

Contests boost reach because people love free stuff (Alex, 2010). In fact, contests are also recommended as a strategy to increase reach by Web Media Brand’s AllFacebook.com (64 Awesome Facebook Marketing Techniques, 2011). Consider giving away the first door prize and two tickets for an event a month beforehand on Facebook to individuals who share and ‘like’ a status on the HRWC’s page. Make sure these contests are simple and easy participate in. For example, “Our first door prize for the Trout Dinner, a $25 gift certificate to Mercers Orchard, as well as two tickets to the event, are up for grabs! All you need to do is ‘like’ and share this status for your chance to win.” Make sure to use a truly random selection process, for example www.random.org to generate random number to indicate which comment wins, to generate contest winners. Also, consider giving away promotional materials like t-shirts and calendars in order to increase brand awareness.
Facebook offers are an option for reaching out to our fans as they are a fairly new tool for pages. Essentially are another way to reward our Facebook fans for being fans in the first place and fans love to be rewarded (Alex, 2010). In effect, this tool will allow users who have ‘liked’ the HRWC page to collect HRWC specials by clicking a post and following instructions to receive them. This may be a good way to sell “member priced tickets available for all Facebook fans” or “HRWC membership specials only available to our Facebook fans.”

Finally, if the coalition continues to produce small videos for the Facebook page then I recommend that a videos tab be added in place of the maps tab. This will give users a single place where they will be able to explore all of the video content that the HRWC has posted to its Facebook page.

Outreach Takeaways:

- **Post consistently**- Post good content on a regular basis. I recommend starting at once a day to once every other day. If you have exciting content but have already posted, use delayed posting to go ahead and get that exciting content in queue to be posted.
- **Exude positivity**- Avoid negative words and topics; talk about the good that comes from something rather than the bad. Avoid words like “don’t” and “never.” Use personal strategies to remind you of this. For example a smiling face at the corner of your computer screen until you get the hang of avoiding these ninja negatives.
- **Promote existing content**- The Coalition has many resources about every watershed topic. Share these with your community to encourage fans to learn more about specifics.
- **Hold contests**- Giving away free stuff on Facebook. This just might be some of the best marketing out there— keep is simple.
- **Use Facebook offers to treat our fans**- Facebook offers becomes another outreach possibility. While this is brand new and not fully understood, it offers a great possibility to reach out and reward our fans.
- **Replace the Maps tab with a videos tab when more videos have been uploaded.**
Non-Facebook

First, focus on those elements from the social media marketing plan and outreach plan pending implementation. The Coalition blog, community posters and informational flyers represent are just a few of these pre-planned recommendations slated to be implemented once operational staffing is back to its previous standing. These strategies when fully implemented will represent a great element of outreach for the HRWC to build on. When possible assess how well these new tactics are functioning through whatever means available.

Promoting more membership at higher levels means understanding why people are generous. Individuals who donate to a nonprofit organization normally fall somewhere between two categories: altruistic givers and non-altruistic givers. Altruistic givers generally motivated to give in order to better society as a whole, while non-altruistic givers are normally motivated by personal gain (Sojka, 1986). In the case of the HRWC, altruistic motivations to give may include wanting to protect the watershed for the safety of current as well as future generations. Non-altruistic motivations may include things like seeking restoration work for private lands and gain of social status through association with the Coalition.

Whatever the reason for a person becoming a paying member of the HRWC, the organization should make sure to maximize the benefits members glean from being involved. This could be greatly enhanced by creating incentive for becoming and maintaining membership in the Coalition. The HRWC has already had some success from this with the introduction of the Yun'wi Gunahi'ta membership level. This is the only residential membership level when there is an immediate and tangible benefit for being a member: a beautifully etched glass paperweight. In addition, people who give at this level are told that their contributions have a specific goal within the organization to ensure the long term survival of the HRWC and its restoration programs.

For this reason, I recommend introducing a membership rewards for each membership level, coupled with additional giving information at most membership level to maximize the perceived benefits of being a member of the Coalition (McKenzie-Mohr, 2011). Rewarding members is a great way to thank them for giving to the HRWC. If you are
able to keep new rewards coming each year, individuals may be more likely to retain their membership. This may sound expensive, but if executed properly, it will help to maximize the outreach of the coalition.

Additionally, I would recommend providing some specifics where possible for members about how their money is going to be used. A possible example of this would be to inform members donating $250 that $100 of their donation goes directly into our endowment and $25 goes to school education programs. This is a great way to give potential donors a face to the impact their charitable donation has on the organization. This sort of breakdown can especially maximize the benefit of altruistic giving by letting the donor see how their contribution is going to better society in some small way. Also consider tracking the efficiency of this and other programs by having a small membership survey for new members. This survey might ask simple questions such as “how did you first hear about the HRWC?” to help keep track of crucial outreach programs.

Before we look at ideas of what kinds of rewards the HRWC could provide to members, here are a couple of ways to maximize the impact of this system.

- Keep it simple and choose rewards that promote the organization itself, like promotional office supplies or clothing.
- Consolidate gift distribution times and distribute small gifts at widely attended events. For those who do not make it to an event, offer to have them pick the items up at the office.
- Always undershoot, if there is ever any doubt if an item or reward will be available to every member do not include it. If the item works out just include it as a bonus thank you item.
- Use the reward system as an opportunity for business partners to provide gifts and/or information to your members. Meanwhile, do not forget to reward business members with something like a window sticker that says something along the lines of “we support clean water for our community.”

Specific reward ideas listed roughly by complexity and cost:
• Membership cards
  o Provide membership cards mailed as membership dues come in. This may seem like a hassle, but it gives the member a real item that solidifies their role within the organization. In addition, as the Coalition grows, it will become much harder to look up who is and is not a member. These membership cards will speed up the process of making this distinction by allowing easy member identification without having to look it up. Additionally, they will open the door to more member specials down the road at HRWC events as well as possibly with community partners.

• Supporter thank you items
  o Supporter thank you items would vary depending on membership level. The key with this is making whatever is in the thank you package nice enough that the person will be inclined to use it which would make the member more likely to engage in interpersonal conversations about the Coalition. They could include any of the following.
    ▪ Small branded items like pens, highlighters, note pads, and flashlights.
    ▪ HRWC totes or grocery bags
    ▪ T-shirts
    ▪ Other HRWC accessories (Like scarfs or hats)

• Staff Dinner
  o Take a moment to really show how much key donors mean to the organization by inviting them, and their partners, to a free meal provided by the HRWC staff. Remember to keep this simple: a small dinner at a key staff or board members house or local diner.

Look into the possibility of crowd-funding specific projects through sites like [http://www.indiegogo.com](http://www.indiegogo.com). This site posts your project and allows persons around the world to donate to them. The only cost of setting up such a project is only around ~3.5% of the money raised through their site for 501(c)(3) organizations. Each of these projects has specific goals and creative rewards for different levels of giving.
For an example of a wildly successful crowd funded projects look at the Hello Harto tour project ([http://www.indiegogo.com/HelloHarto](http://www.indiegogo.com/HelloHarto)) where Hannah Heart, a YouTube star, raised over three times her goal to travel the world and make YouTube Videos. Make sure to have a strong plan when approaching when attempting something like this to ensure the highest likelihood of success. Such a plan should have a strong pitch for the projects need made preferably in form of video or a straight forward paragraph.

Finally, consider employing future student outreach intern to help maintain and improve these programs. In addition to this the intern could be responsible for seeking aid for larger projects by making call to design firms asking about the probability for pro bono design work. These contributions could make memorable Facebook content.

Outreach Takeaways:

- Make sure to follow through on previously outlined recommendations and assess how well they work to accomplish their goals.
- Reward membership in such a way that it promotes the organization.
- Add questions to membership forms that can assess outreach impacts.
- Consider tools like Indiegogo.com to help fund specific projects.
- Pursue student outreach interns that will be able to help with upkeep and do the foot work for new projects.

**Closing Statements**

Finding the best way to reach out to a specific audience and instill the desire to participate in your organization has never been a straight forward and simple task. It is my hope that between the previous works I have done with the Coalition and this document will give an exceptional insight on outreach tactics that will be effective in fostering community support for the organization. Moving forward continue the adoption of new outreach and continue to assess what aspects are working best over time.
Appendix A: Original Social Media Marketing Plan

SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING PLAN FOR
THE HIWASSEE RIVER WATERSHED
COALITION

Prepared by Jacob Stone

5/2/2012

INTRODUCTION

Social media is an emerging and ever growing medium for the modern day individual to interact with others through. As Marchal McLuhan, a 1970’s media theorist, states, “In the name of ‘progress,’ our official culture is striving to force the new media to do the work of the old.” This statement reflects the fact that in this day in age mainstream marketing and public outreach has become increasingly digital and social in nature due to the emergence and popularity of social medias. For this reason it should be utilized as a tool to reach out to the public by the Hiwassee River Watershed Coalition, or HRWC.

The HRWC is a local, non-governmental, nonprofit organization whose focus is on the conservation of the upper Hiwassee River watershed. The HRWC’s mission is work with and within to Cherokee and Clay counties in NC and Towns and Union counties in north GA to facilitate water quality improvements in lakes and streams within the watershed. In order to accomplish this, the HRWC relies heavily on the contributions of both time and money from the local community. The following social media marketing plan has been designed in the hopes of increasing the effectiveness of effort spent by the HRWC’s on outreach and fundraising.
GOALS OF THE PROGRAM AND EXPECTED RESULTS

The primary goal of this social media marketing plan is to create and effective and efficient plan for performing social media marketing and outreach for the HRWC without adding cumbersome amounts of work for the organizations staff of, soon to be, three. This will be hopefully accomplished by creating a clear itemized methodology for implementing social marketing efforts. In addition to this primary goal, this plan also hopes to work towards the HRWC’s following goals.

- Increasing awareness of individuals in the 30-50 range
  Mainly couples within the 30-50’s range are the driving force for volunteer work within the HRWC. For this reason it is the goal of the HRWC to better inform and involve individuals in this range with a focus on informing them about upcoming volunteer opportunities.

- Increasing awareness of individuals in the 50+ range
  Couples in the 50+ range are the primary source of paid membership and devout fundraiser event attendees. In addition to this these individuals are often retired. For this reason, the HRWC would like to insure that these individuals remain involved and participating in HRWC events.

- Promoting fundraising events
  Fundraising events are a significant source of operating fund income for the HRWC. Being able to utilize social media for promoting fundraising events would not only increase the potential yield of these events but also increase overall community awareness of the coalition and its efforts.

With these targets in mind I anticipate that over the next year of implementing this plan the HRWC will see the following results: 50 or more additional ‘likes’ on the HRWC facebook page and higher levels of volunteer and fundraising events.
ACTION PLAN AND TIMELINE

AVAILABLE RESOURCES

This plan has been formulated under the assumption that 100$ can be dedicated to social media marketing and outreach as well as 4-6 man hours a week. In addition to these fixed resources the HRWC will have a graduate intern for the summer of 2012 at their disposal to help with the bulk of this plans implementation.

PART 1: FACEBOOK

Currently the HRWC’s Facebook page is updated around 2-6 times a month with post content that includes event information, photo albums, and info on what the HRWC is doing. The page includes key information about the HRWC and an applet that manages email newsletter subscriptions. The following is a list of suggestions for the HRWC’s Facebook page that will hopefully increase awareness and reach of the coalition. The majority of the suggestions are simple changes that should be made in the first month of this plans implementation in hopes of effectively building a community that can support future latter portions of this plan.
Above: The current HRWC Facebook page's reach and demographic as of 5/3/2012. This will be used as a reference for marketing progress in the future.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Media and photos - First and foremost using Facebook as a method to share media content with the HRWC’s support base is critical to increasing the reach of the organization. For this reason I recommend that fans of the page be given permission to tag themselves in photos on the page. This will not only foster higher levels of participation from our support base but also allow friends of those individuals to see their involvement with the HRWC. This is accomplished by associating that picture on their profile with the HRWC’s Facebook page (see below).
Above: When looking at David’s facebook photos and image that was tagged on the HRWC’s page shows the HRWC as the source of the photo increasing reach by showcasing the coalition to the friends of those tagged in photos.

In addition to photos it may be advantageous to have some video posts in place of all text posts. Video posts are more personable and can be more entertaining. For an example of this technique being used effectively see Burberrys Facebook page and look for personal messages from the Chief Creative Officer Christopher Bailey to their fan base (http://www.facebook.com/burberry). A good opportunity for implementing something along these lines may be to make an introductory video to place at the top of the page welcoming visitors to the page, giving brief description of the HRWC, and encouraging them to like the page to stay in the loop.

Posting- To maximize reach posting should occur about 2-4 times a week. These posts should stress quality over quantity and their content could include but is not limited to:

- What is currently happening with the HRWC
- Relevant news/blog posts
- Photos from HRWC events
Galleries of events need little to no introduction
Single photos should be accompanied by a short narrative to give the view a better sense of place- (also a good way to showcase featured members/volunteers)

- Event promotions (use in combination with Facebook events to get people involved)

Again, it cannot be stressed enough that while frequency of posting is important in maximizing the reach of the Facebook page it should never come at the expense of a posts quality. Posting can be prepared ahead of time however the most important posts should be put up in the late afternoon as preferably on Friday or Saturday. Other posts should also be placed mostly in the afternoon, however not entirely, any day of the week. When it comes to post timing the rule of thumb should be that posts made in the late afternoon and Friday or Saturday will get more traffic however it may be different people than would see the post at other times of the day and week.

Feedback and Interaction- Social Medias like Facebook are built around the concept of a conversation and much like an interpersonal conversation a person can easily become bored with someone who does not talk back. For this reason it is important to foster the conversation between the HRWC and its support base. This can be accomplished by including an element for feedback in posts as well as responding personally to individuals that comment and post on the HRWC's Facebook page. These personal replies should be managed by a single person from the HRWC to maintain consistency or if more than one person would manage personal replies there should be an outlined code of conduct. (these can be discussed whenever we are all together in 2 weeks)

Promotional tools- Because of its vast reach Facebook can be an incredibly effective method of promoting involvement in the HRWC. This can be accomplished by making Facebook events to correspond with events that the HRWC is involved in and promoting them via organic posting and sharing as well as paid advertisement. I recommend that paid advertisement be used as seen fit for most fundraising event and be done about one to two weeks before an event but as close to it as possible. Additionally, the Facebook page has a link to a form where individuals can sign up to receive the HRWC's E-newsletter however it is not clearly labeled. I recommend the image in this app box and name of it be changed in
order to better reflect what the app is because without motivation few individuals would click through and discover that this was the way to sign up for the e-newsletter (see below: the current page cover for the HRWC).

PART 2: BLOG

Currently the HRWC does rely on its webpage as the primary medium to distribute current events and news about the organization. Because of this the webpage must be changed throughout the year and can sometimes feel cluttered. For this reason I recommend that the HRWC start a blog to post these ideas in the first 1-3 months of this media plan. This blog will include elements like featured stories, news about the HRWC, and upcoming events. This will easily give any viewer a real time idea of what is going on with the coalition instead of having to wait for the monthly e-newsletter.

This content could also be posted about on the Facebook page and even given a highlight box on the webpage in order to showcase new information on the home page.

PART 3: WEBSITE

The page is full of valuable material about the efforts on the HRWC and the membership application information. Due to the fact that the webpage is maintained by an out of state private contractor, there are limitations on the availability of resources when it
comes to maintaining and changing the page. The following are a set of recommendations for changes that may increase the accessibility of information through this resource.

Layout- The layout could be improved by shifting the current organization of the navigation tabs. These tabs would be shifted to a left-side panel to capitalize on dead space and organized in a way that allows for easy navigation through the available information, clustering the multiple tabs under the more general categories. This would make navigating the webpage more natural and familiar. Because of the current impact of social media, icons such as “Contact us on Facebook” should be made more accessible by moving it to a more visible location in the organization’s homepage. Following the social media panels, a link to the RSS feed for the organizations blog should be made available to give visitors immediate access to current events. Doing this would lower the amount of maintenance required, merging the work of two different web-management tasks to one link. An additional idea to consider would be an inclusion an upcoming event banner on the right side of the home screen. This would allow information on revenue-generating events and volunteer events to be visible upon initial access to the homepage. Whereas the current layout requires users to scroll to access various postings, this proposed layout would provide user-friendly links to general categories making more information easily available to users without having to navigate through the entire site.

CONCLUSIONS

Social media can be a strong driving force for an organization. This is because four of the seven most trafficked webpages are social media oriented. It is my hope that with the help of these recommendations the HRWC will be able to grow its influence and reach within its watershed’s expanse.
Appendix B: Original Marketing Plan

COMMUNITY OUTREACH STRATEGIES FOR THE HIWASSEE RIVER WATERSHED COALITION

INTRODUCTION AND GOALS

This outreach strategy has been formulated around the Hiwassee River Watershed Coalition’s (HRWC) goal of increasing public awareness and participation in their organization. Achieving these goals will help the HRWC to increase the organizations impact on preserving water quality throughout the entirety of the Hiwassee River Watershed. For the purposes of this paper, outreach suggestions have been operationalized by looking at specific outreach suggestions for each major component, carried out by the HRWC followed by a bulleted list of specific suggestions for each of these components. In addition to this, because the use of social media marketing is an emerging field, the majority of this document is dedicated to discussing how the HRWC could use social media as a marketing tool.

THINGS TO ALWAYS KEEP IN MIND

In order to maximize the effectiveness of outreach efforts, a number of staple practices should be adhered to, the first of which is to ensure that the HRWC remains as visible as possible to the community as a whole. This can be accomplished through a combination of consistent branding of documents and materials created by the HRWC, as well as well as getting the coalition’s name and logo to appear in as many places as possible. Naturally, having higher levels of community awareness will help to contribute to increased community participation.
Therefore, in order to maximize this awareness and participation, social media should be maintained to keep the community informed and actively interested (These specific strategies are in the social media marketing plan for the HRWC fond below in detailed).

In addition to maintaining the HRWC’s presence within the surrounding communities, community partnerships are also pivotal to the effectiveness of outreach efforts. Having community partnerships provide new channels for reaching additional community members by giving the HRWC a presence within the communities that surround those businesses and organizations. In addition to this, they can also play a significant role in supporting HRWC events and efforts by providing in kind, monetary, or publicity support.

SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

- Partner with local businesses to provide support in the ways of event door prizes, food at volunteer events, etc. (Banks and grocery stores may be a good starting place)
- Look into partnering with local organizations like churches to do volunteer work (or other functions) that would not only help the HRWC’s mission but also potentially get new people involved.
- Place HRWC signs at sites that are managed by the coalition to work on showing the community what we do.
- Maintain Social marketing outreach to create participation and involvement with members (see social media marketing plan below)
- Where possible participate in community events (Like organization fairs or field days)
- Continue current press releases and newsletters

FUNDRAISING EVENTS

SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

- Have people RSVP to events when possible (i.e. Advanced ticket purchase)
- Obtain more door prizes for attendees
- Personally invite key community members (especially those who represent large organizations; ie- Pastors, political figures, presidents of organizations, Chambers of Commerce) with free tickets.
VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

- Place flyers about volunteer opportunities in areas near work sites even residential areas
- Ask for individuals to RSVP or let whoever is in charge know as to foster commitment (use reasoning like needing to know how many trimmers to bring or food)
- If a specific group helped in site restoration offer to place their information on the site sign alongside the HRWC logo
- Directly contact local groups in areas surrounding a worksite
- Promote offering free membership to all volunteers that have given 10-20 hours of time

MEMBERSHIP DRIVE

SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

- Outreach to real estate agents
- Presence in local events
- Gift a ticket promotions where members can purchase advance tickets for an even more reduced price to bring non-members to events (I.E. for the trout dinner if you offer members advanced tickets for $10 then allow them to purchase up to ten additional “gift tickets” which would be clearly marked as gift tickets to non-members of the HRWC for $5 each)
- Reduced membership cost (free base memberships and reduced upper-level rates)
Appendix C: Social Media Ideas and Delayed Posting

Walkthrough

SMM Ideas 6-8-12

But first a fun (fun meaning super useful) Facebook tool

Facebook posts can be prepared ahead of time and scheduled to be posted automatically. This is useful for making posts more time aware in reaching your anticipated audience or the largest audience in many cases. At the same time to make the ‘best’ use of this tool make sure to look back at previous posts and see how many people viewed them and liked/commented while keeping in mind time of post is not the only variable in our audiences reaction to as post (this basically means try to take into account content and ‘quality’ of the post as well and hopefully over time we will start to see patterns of what works best).

Ok, enough of all that. Here is the step by step play through.

1) Make your post AS the HRWC on the main page like you normally would. Then click the little clock symbol (outlined in red here)

2) Next fill in the Year, Month, Day, Hour, and even minute you want the post to be posted in the future with the buttons immediately above where you pressed the clock symbol.
3) Make sure the post sounds exactly how you want it because it is not easily edited after scheduling. (I did wind up changing the wording around just a bit on this one—see next picture)

4) Press Schedule where the post button would have been.
5) Congratulations! Your post is scheduled. However, if for some reason you need to view what has been scheduled or change/remove a post that is “too be released”, click on the edit page tab at the top right of the admin home page then ‘Use Activity Log’ in the pull down menu.

6) Now you are able to see what posts have been scheduled and if you need to edit time or release or remove the post all you have to do is hold your mouse over the post and click
the button that will appear in the red outlined area in the photo above. This will have a pull down menu with these options.

This week’s SMM assessment in a FLASH
Top Facebook posts: were done during the week between noon and 5pm and included a single picture with commentary. These posts seemed to foster higher participation from our community and thus higher reach.
This week’s Facebook Flop:

Sunday during Church, Jacob should have known better. Low reach might also be contributed to links not having as high of an “importance factor” in newsfeeds.

For the future: Might be interesting to see what weekend performance of posts is like, as well as posts before noon. We may want to hold off on more serious post suggestions below (I.E. the post asking for event feedback) until we have a better understanding of when our reach will be the highest.
Blog Ideas

1) Article on BMP’s and/or biological/traditional indexes of biological integrity that the hrwc uses. (I can get you supporting literature to use in these if you’d like just let me know which ones to research)

2) An introduction to the blog and its purpose. What kinds of things do you plan to write about. How it will be a faster way to let people know about things. Talk about new outreach efforts.

3) Current events in the community or about the HRWC

Possible Facebook post ideas (outside of normal operations posts that we have already been doing)

1) River facts (already scheduled)

2) Summer 2012 Rail Excursion through the Scenic Hiwassee River Gorge in East Tennessee
   http://www.wataugavalleyrynhs.org/excursions.php

3) (Maybe) use facebook as a grounds to pilot the idea of starting an annual river day by asking for community feedback (this could turn into the next fundraiser that replaces whichever one it was you mentioned that one time. Anyways here is an example of the one they do here in Ohio http://www.greatmiamiriverdays.org/)
Possible reposts from our organization feed

**Trout Unlimited**

Where are you traveling to fish this summer? | 10 Tips to Keep You Catching Fish During Your Fly Fishing Travels | http://owl.li/bq01v

**10 Tips to Keep You Catching Fish During Your Fly Fishing Travels | Gink...**

owl.li

It's easy to get out of your game when you're traveling and fly fishing a new piece of water. This post covers ten principles I live by fly fishing...

Like · Comment · 4 · Share · 36 minutes ago via HootSuite

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**Land Trust for the Little Tennessee**

the ILT and The Wilderness Society North Carolina's Mountain Treasures float trip on 6/15 is full, BIG SHOUT OUT to Outdoor 76 for providing boats and shuttle - we are thankful for their support! Another float trip will be planned for later this summer, stay tuned for more information!

Like · Comment · Share · 1 · 2 hours ago · 🕒

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**Trout Unlimited**

Give Back To The River You Love | http://owl.li/bqn73

**Give Back To The River You Love**

owl.li

"Give Back To The River You Love" is the Deschutes River Conservancy's community-wide campaign to improve streamflow and waterflow in the Deschutes...

Like · Comment · 9 · Share · 4 hours ago via HootSuite
The Ridges Resort and Marina shared an event: Ridges Chatuge Splash, A Celebration of Water, Music & Art.

Ridges Chatuge Splash, A Celebration of Water, Music & Art
June 8 at The Ridges Resort and Marina

Nantahala Outdoor Center
Think you're the fastest on the Nanty? Come join us for our first Nantahala River Raft Race this Saturday, June 9th. Guests, guides, and river rats compete as teams of four, from Ferebee Park to NOC. Think you've got what it takes? Registration is $40 per team, and you can sign up at www.noc.com. Late registration/check-in is from 2-3 near the NOC Adventure Center. We've got some great prizes, plus, winners will get a year's worth of bragging rights, and a plaque commemorating your team that will be displayed at River's End! More information @ http://www.noc.com/noccom/festivals-a-events/nantahala-river-raft-race/

Trout Unlimited
What awakens your trout-fishing soul? | This River is Wild on the soul of a trout bum | http://owl.li/jboELk

This River is Wild: Awake My Soul
owl.li

Like · Comment · Share · 1 · 15 hours ago · 
Appendix D: Facebook Pamphlet

### Events
Facebook event posts are an important way we get the word out about various events and fundraisers. You can find our events under the event tab on our Facebook page.

### Tagging: Us and Photos
You can tag the Hiwassee River Watershed Coalition in your Facebook posts, pictures, and comments. Just use the ‘@’ symbol followed by the word Hiwassee. As long as you have liked our Facebook page you should then be able to click our page from a dropdown menu that appears (see above) and tag our page for all to see.

If you decide to attend one of our events you can let us know that you are attending by clicking ‘Join’ or ‘Maybe’ at the top right of the page. This will also allow you to invite your other Facebook friends with the ‘Invite Friends’ button in the same place. This will help us to promote our event directly.

### Why Facebook is Important
Facebook is a vital tool for the Hiwassee River Watershed Coalition to keep in touch with its members and community. It allows us to keep you up to date with the current activity. It also helps us to reach out to people who do not know about us and/or what we do as an organization.

By contributing to the Coalition’s Facebook page in the simple ways outlined in this brochure, you can help greatly increase the visibility of the Hiwassee River Watershed Coalition within the community.

### Sharing
If something we post interests you, or you want your friends to know about it, share our posts! You can share photos, statuses, and events from our Facebook page.

By clicking ‘share’ underneath our posts (circled below) you can choose to repost our story on your Wall, on a friend’s Wall, on a Group page, or send it directly to a friend through a message.

You can also add your own personal message to the post as you share it, like “Look what I just had for dinner!”

### Commenting
The more people who comment on our statuses and photos, the more people who will see it in their own news feed.

The key to crafting the best comment is to think quality over quantity. To have the largest impact, you want to aim to spark conversation that others will want to continue. For example “I am so happy that the creek is cleaned up. I may just have to go fishing next weekend!”

To comment on a photo or status just click “Comment” or “Write a Comment...” at the bottom of a post and start typing.
Appendix E: Flyer Designs
Clean Water For You

Hiwassee River Watershed Coalition, Inc.

Clean Water For You

Hiwassee River Watershed Coalition, Inc.
Helping you protect our
Lakes, Rivers, and Streams

Clean Water
For You

Hiwassee River
Watershed Coalition, Inc.

Clean Water
For You

Hiwassee River
Watershed Coalition, Inc.
Clean Water For You

Hiwassee River Watershed Coalition, Inc.
Helping you protect our Lakes, Rivers, and Streams

Clean Water For You

We help you protect our water for everyone

Hiwassee River Watershed Coalition, Inc. Get involved today!
We help you protect our water for everyone

Hiwassee River Watershed Coalition, Inc. Get involved today!

We help you protect our water for everyone

Hiwassee River Watershed Coalition, Inc. Get involved today!
Appendix F: Template for individual project outreach

The Hiwassee River Watershed Coalition would like to invite you and your family to take part in a (river/stream/shore) restoration project that is going on near you!

On (date) we are going to be (doing what) at (location). Come help us work to (intended effect of the project/restore healthy stream qualities/clean up river or lake, etc.... then mention how this action helps the environment and or the people in this area).

If you have questions please contact (person) at (number) (this is also where you could put RSVP information)

Find us on Facebook at: http://www.facebook.com/hiwasseeriver
References


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