Lower Columbia Estuary Partnership Communications Plan
2023-2025

Goal: Position the staff of Lower Columbia Estuary Partnership as thought leaders

Thought leadership is the delivery of authentic and genuine content that uses the expertise, insight, and experience of the individual, with the goal of sharing that wisdom with others. Thought leadership requires that staff maintain strong partnerships and develop new relationships.

Target audience: The activities in this plan were developed with a preference towards reaching a specific audience that can help the Estuary Partnership achieve its communication goal. The target audience includes members of the congressional delegation; public officials (staff and elected) in select areas where the Estuary Partnership has existing projects or desires to develop projects; individual decision-makers working for funders, including public agencies and private foundations; and peers and leaders in the science and restoration sector.

Communications tools: This communications plan relies on the communications tools and platforms already available to the Estuary Partnership (CRM, website, social media, gatherings). The use of existing tools and platforms will be scrutinized through the new lens – the stated communications plan goal.

Staff resources to implement the communications plan: The Estuary Partnership employees two full-time staff members who are responsible for the implementation of this plan. However, the plan requires collaboration and engagement from others at the Estuary Partnership – primarily the executive director, and the Restoration, Monitoring, and Stormwater teams.

Living document: This document may be revised to take advantage of emerging opportunities, to incorporate lessons learned throughout the execution of this plan, or new requests for engagement from staff or stakeholders.

Email marketing

Strategy: Advancing thought leadership using the Estuary Partnership's email marketing channels (eNewsletter, eUpdate, and program/project listservs) requires the Estuary Partnership to share accurate, timely, and engaging content with our partners and supporters.

Objective measurement of success (eNewsletter)
- An increase in subscribers to the eNewsletter over the lifespan of this plan.
  - ✓ April 2024 4,797
- An increase in open rates over the lifespan of this plan.

- ✓ April 2024 – 32% - climate monitoring research project; science to policy event; Steigerwald event/ft George brewery
- ✓ Feb 2024 – 36% - stormwater job posting; Casey sixkiller visit
- ✓ December 2023 – 36%. Top click RFQ, Second: congressional tour @campen
- ✓ October 2023 – 42%. Top click: annual report; second: event
- ✓ August 2023 – 37%: top click: annual celebration; 2nd: program assistant job posting
- ✓ June 2023 – 33%. Top click: CREC; 2nd: EFLR project
- ✓ April 2023 – 34% Top click: CREC; 2nd: event
- ✓ February 2023 – 34% Top click: CREC; 2nd: event

Tactics to reach the objectives and meet our <u>eNewsletter</u> strategy
- Add eNewsletter archive section to the website.
- Add more eNewsletter sign up options in prominent locations on the website.
- Research options to clean up the eNewsletter list.
- ✓ Resend eNewsletter 2x.
- Develop social media marketing campaigns for each eNewsletter.
- ✓ Create new visuals and style guide for the eNewsletter.
- Establish new uses for the eNewsletter listserv, quarterly deep dives into programs.

Objective measurement of success (<u>eUpdate</u>)
- An increase in open rates over the lifespan of this plan.
  - ✓ April 2024 – 29%
  - ✓ March 2024 – 34%
  - ✓ February 2024 -35%
  - ✓ January 2024 – 33%
  - ✓ December 2023 – 35%
  - ✓ November 2023 -46%
  - ✓ October 2023 – 55%
  - ✓ September 2023 – 24%
  - ✓ August 2023 – 30%
  - ✓ July 2023 – 53%
  - ✓ June 2023 – 24%
  - ✓ May 2023 – 29%
  - ✓ April 2023 – 28%
  - ✓ March 2023 – 29%
  - ✓ February 2023 -27%

Tactics to reach the objectives and meet our <u>eUpdate</u> strategy
- ✓ Ensure that the list is updated on a regular basis with funders, elected officials (and staffers), partners, and sponsors.
- Develop a "mission statement" for the eUpdate to guide its content and management
- Explore options for rebranding the eUpdate.

Objective measurement of success (<u>program/project listserv</u>)

- Each significant project or new program at the Estuary Partnership has their own unique listserv (internal goal).
  - ✓ East Fork
  - ✓ Baker Bay
  - ✓ SWG
  - ✓ Campen
  - ✓ SRD

Tactics to reach the objectives and meet our (<u>program/project listserv</u>) strategy
- Staff request a listserv and develop a plan for engagement with Jasmine.
- Staff build communications with partners into their project workplans.

Influencer/ambassador marketing

Strategy: Advancing thought leadership by creating relationships with people with special influence or access to a broader group of people (Congressional staffers, members of the media) beyond the Estuary Partnership elevates the profile of the organization and its reach.

Objective measurements of success
- Increase annual federal delegation support for NEPs/LCEP – Estuary Caucus participation, National Estuary Week co-sponsorship.
- Media coverage of Estuary Partnership increases and expands beyond high-profile restoration.
- Prioritized partners serve as promoters of the Estuary Partnership.
- Grants are written and new projects developed with communications/stakeholder outreach in mind.

Tactics to reach the objectives and meet our influencer/ambassador marketing strategy
- ~~Annual DC visits to meet with federal delegation.~~
- Personalized frequent communications with federal delegation staff and prioritized partners.
- ✓ Local tours of project sites for federal delegation members and staff.
- Press releases and media engagement included in each major restoration, stormwater, monitoring, and education project.
- ✓ Add In the News section to the website.
- ✓ Media trainings for staff.
- Develop a list of most important partners and funders to prioritize building relationship with annually.
- Promote presentations, conferences, and reports prepared by staff.

Host in-person and virtual events

Strategy: Advancing thought leadership using in-person and virtual gatherings (site tours, Science to Policy Summit, Columbia River Estuary Conference, Science Work Group, volunteer events, paddle trips) as a demonstration of the organization's strong network.

Objective measurements of success
- Increase site tours with key stakeholders, including sponsors.
- Evaluation of events like Science to Policy and CREC with tools post-event survey to attendees.
- Science Work Group attendance and meeting frequency increases.

Tactics to reach the objectives and meet our Host in-person and virtual event strategy
- identify key stakeholders and important milestones for tours.
- each interested program has a unique plan for in-person and virtual events.

Website

Strategy: Advancing thought leadership using our website as an easily navigable, accurate, and engaging resource for audiences including our current and new partners.

Objective measurements of success
- Analytics show increase in visitors and page views and decrease in bounce rate over the lifespan of this plan.
- Webpages updated with increased frequency.

Tactics to reach the objectives and meet our website strategy
- Add new sections to the website for engaging content (news, eNews).
- Reduce # of clicks to find important content – annual report, restoration sites, popular content.
- Refresh each program page annually (biennially?) to ensure content is fresh, engaging, and beyond basic ADA compliance.
- Refresh About The River page with information relevant to LCEP work.
- Use social media and email listservs to direct people to the website.

Social media

Strategy: Advancing thought leadership using our social media channels to communicate engaging, accurate, and interesting content.

Objective measurements of success
- Increased followers across each channel over the lifespan of this plan.

Tactics to meet our objectives and reach our social media strategy

- Co-brant posts with partners and sponsors to extend reach beyond the Estuary Partnership's followers.
- Encourage volunteers and other program participants to post about their experiences and tag us.
- Post about each program area at least every two months.
- Work with Science Team members to deliver informative posts about our technical work.