

Date: October 8, 2010

To: Environmental Quality Commission

From: Dick Pedersen, Director

Subject: Agenda item J, Informational item: DEQ's Communications Program
October 20-22, 2010, EQC meeting

Purpose of item This informational item provides the commission with an overview of DEQ's outreach and communications program as background information for the EQC retreat in November.

Why this is important DEQ's communications team provides DEQ with consistent messaging and branding, preparation for public meetings, outreach events and working with the media, coaching and training for interviews and presentations, and writing and editing services to transform academic and scientific treatises into relevant news items for the public.

Background DEQ's Office of Communications and Outreach staff of four public information officers, one web coordinator, headquarters reception staff and manager provide hands-on communications assistance and consulting to DEQ staff across the state, and access to agency people and programs through the headquarters reception desk. Regional public information officers work directly with local administrators and staff to ensure consistent branding and quality of external communications materials, media and other training, consistent messaging, and implementation of communications objectives. Central administration of this element of the communications program ensures consistency and accountability to program objectives.

The web coordinator works with part-time volunteer web coordinators from each program and region to keep the external web site updated. The quality and consistency of the external web site reflects the web team members' varying levels of time and skill level.

Challenges and opportunities How people get news is ever-changing. Daily newspapers, TV and radio news are all changing their approaches in a rapid evolution. State organizations, like DEQ, have traditionally relied on print media to carry their messages. Today people flock to the web for news and interaction.

People are also demanding more meaningful interaction on

environmental issues. They want to weigh in on local permitting and regulatory matters that affect them, and giving testimony at a public hearing at the end of the rulemaking process is not satisfying to many.

Some of DEQ's biggest communications challenges are not related to what we are communicating, but how.

Our current communications program is shifting its focus from traditional methods, such as providing news releases and media relations, to becoming a full-service communications consulting resource for the agency. Our goal is to work with staff at the beginning of a project or unfolding of an issue to tailor the right suite of communications tools in order to provide relevant information to Oregonians.

The loss of one public information officer position due to budget cuts last biennium presented an opportunity for current staff to revamp and streamline the communications program, and embrace the "continual improvement" motto of the agency's LEAN/Kaizen program.

Next steps Currently the Office of Communications and Outreach is focusing more time and attention on media and web communications to provide relevant, easy-to-understand and more concise information and allow sharing of our web content through social media outlets.

EQC involvement DEQ is not requesting EQC involvement at this time.

Attachments None

Approved:

Section: _____
Joanie Stevens-Schwenger

Division: _____
Kerri Nelson

Report prepared by: Joanie Stevens-Schwenger
Phone: 503-229-6585