

**Stakeholder Outreach and Research Communications
Program
Final Report**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In February 2007, the University of Washington's College of Forest Resources (UW CFR) entered into a cooperative task agreement with Glacier Bay National Park and Preserve (GBNPP) to design and implement a Science Outreach and Research Communications Program (SORC). This report summarizes the background, context and activities of the program. In addition, this report evaluates program implementation, identifies barriers to success, and makes recommendations to GBNPP concerning future science outreach activities.

Program Goal

The goal of the SORC program was to enhance stakeholder understanding of GBNPP research activities associated with cruise ship use. The program's underlying logic supposed that as stakeholder understanding of science and decision-making processes increases, the risk of negative policy challenges is reduced.

Program Design

To achieve this overarching goal, the SORC program developed a set of objectives and activities occurring in four distinct program phases.

- A **design phase** consisted of the selection of program target audiences and the development of program strategies and messages.
- An **establishment phase** consisted in the development of a program website, multimedia presentation and brochure.
- An **implementation phase** consisted in the implementation of the strategic outreach plan, as well as research update bulletins.
- An **evaluation phase** consisted of evaluation of program implementation and outcomes.

Program Evaluation

Overall SORC was not successful in implementing program activities and achieving its objectives and goals.

- The assessment of the stakeholder environment to support the development of target stakeholders, outreach strategies and salient messages was not completed.
- A program brochure was developed but not distributed.
- A program website and multimedia presentation were developed, but not delivered.
- The program did not develop research update bulletins or to conduct outreach activities such as presentations to stakeholder groups.
- Due to lack of development of outreach materials and audiences, the program did not establish communication channels and information feedback mechanisms between research teams, GBNPP managers and stakeholders.
- As a result, the program was unable to enhance stakeholder's understanding of the GBNPP research program, or build stakeholder acceptance in order to enhance the perceived legitimacy of vessel management decisions.

Barriers to Implementation

A number of barriers prevented successful program implementation. These fall into four categories:

- **Lack of shared vision of program purpose and need** resulted in an inability to implement the program as designed. The result was the pursuit of more generic outreach activities in the form of a website and brochure.
- **Failure to finalize the stakeholder assessment process** resulted in the pursuit of implementation activities absent clear strategic direction on target audiences and messages. The result was the pursuit of generic outreach activities in the form of a website and brochure.
- **Communication and collaboration challenges** resulted in UW CFR program staff developing program strategies and tactics in relative isolation.
- **Ambiguity over institutional roles and responsibilities** resulted in non-alignment of institutional strengths and capacity with program needs and activities.

Recommendations to GBNPP

Based on the evaluation and assessment of barriers, we make the following recommendations to GBNPP:

- Assess and discuss the need for outreach and communications activities
- Facilitate interactions between GBNPP and SAB prior to finalization of science
- Internalize science outreach and communication activities

PURPOSE AND OUTLINE

This document satisfies reporting requirements articulated in the cooperative Task Agreement J8W07070005 titled "Stakeholder Outreach and Research Communications Program" (SORC) between the University of Washington (UW) and the National Park Service (NPS). According to this agreement, the final report shall include the following components, which comprise the sections of this report:

1. Program background and context
2. Summary of program activities
3. Program evaluation
4. Barriers, problems and challenges associated with program implementation
5. Recommendations

1) PROGRAM BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

In 2003, Glacier Bay National Park and Preserve (GBNPP) completed the Vessel Quota and Operation Requirements Final Environmental Impact Statement (VQOR FEIS) and associated Record of Decision (ROD). The VQOR FEIS established vessel quotas for a variety of motorized craft in GBNPP, including cruise ships. The cruise ship seasonal use quota for the June-August "peak" season was set at 139 cruise ship entries. However, the decision allowed for a potential 32% increase in cruise ship seasonal use. According to the VQOR FEIS, decisions concerning increases in cruise ship use are to rely upon the establishment of

decision criteria to be “based on the results of and guidance provided through studies that examine the effects of (cruise ship) vessels on all park resources and visitor experience (ROD, p.18).” The VQOR FEIS process established a Science Advisory Board (SAB) to facilitate empirical research, modeling and monitoring in support of cruise ship decision-making. In 2006, the SAB prioritized a number of studies examining the potential effects of cruise ships on the physical, marine biological and socio-cultural environments of GBNPP.

In January 2007, the University of Washington, College of Forest Resources (UW CFR) proposed that GBNPP and UW CFR undertake a joint stakeholder outreach and research communication program. The primary goals of this program were stated as follows:

1. To enhance stakeholder understanding of the GBNPP research program
2. To build stakeholder acceptance and enhance the perceived legitimacy of vessel management decisions
3. To establish the program as a well-recognized nexus and credible source for integrated research program information

UW CFR developed a series of objectives to support the above overarching program goals:

- Conduct a thorough assessment of the research stakeholder environment to aid in message development and communication strategies
- Establish a well-recognized nexus and trusted source for integrated research program information
- Establish effective and efficient communication channels and information feedback mechanisms between research teams, GBNPP managers and interested stakeholders
- Create individual (i.e. for each study) and integrated (for the entire research program) messages concerning physical, biological and socio-cultural investigations for dissemination to interested stakeholders
- Effectively synthesize and communicate research program goals, objectives, activities and other pertinent information to interested stakeholders through a variety of communication and outreach methods
- Thoroughly evaluate the performance and outcomes of the program and recommend modifications; evaluate the need for a longer-term program

Objectives were to be achieved through a sequence of activities occurring in four phases. An initial program design phase would assess stakeholders, develop outreach and communication strategies, and create program communication messages. The next phase would establish the necessary communication channels to launch and brand the program. An implementation phase would conduct planned outreach and communication activities developed in the previous phases. A final evaluation phase would measure program performance.

This above proposal was accepted by GBNPP and formalized by the execution of Task Agreement J8W07070005 written against the Pacific Northwest Cooperative Ecosystem Studies Unit Cooperative Agreement H8W07060001.

2) SUMMARY OF PROGRAM ACTIVITIES

UW CFR staff developed a work plan in March 2007 to guide the collaborative work to be undertaken under J8W07070005. The program of work reflected the four sequential phases – design, establishment, implementation and evaluation/reporting. The work plan also developed key milestones for each phase, supported by a detailed program schedule. This

section of the report summarizes program activities for the design, establishment and implementation phases.

A. DESIGN PHASE: FEBRUARY/MARCH 2007

The design phase, scheduled to occur in February and March 2007, called for: 1) the creation of the program workplan, as well as 2) the completion of the collaborative stakeholder assessment (SA) process. The SA process was to produce a deliverable summarizing program messages and communication/outreach strategies.

<i>Table 1: Summary of activities for Design Phase</i>	
Activity	Comment
Workplan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish milestones, activities and evaluation mechanisms • Submitted March 2007
Stakeholder Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborative effort to identify priority stakeholders, develop outreach strategies and tactics, and to develop program messages • Not completed
<i>March Report</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UW CFR reports that stakeholder assessment is behind schedule and reminds program participants that assessment is a collaborative process that must occur prior to implementation of next phases

B. ESTABLISHMENT PHASE: APRIL/MAY, 2007

The SORC establishment phase was to build off the completion of the Stakeholder Assessment process. The failure to complete the SA process resulted in challenges for this phase that were identified and addressed in the April and May monthly reports.

According to the SORC work plan, messages would be incorporated into three primary information products to launch and establish the program: 1) An initial introductory letter introducing the program to stakeholders; 2) a webpage and multimedia presentation (MMP), and; 3) a brochure summarizing the research and science communications program. In addition, efforts would commence to schedule outreach activities with key stakeholders identified in the SA process. Of the three information products scheduled for delivery in this phase, only the brochure was completed (in August 2007). The introductory letter, website, and multimedia presentations were not completed.

In April, UW CFR program staff visited GBNPP to establish communication channels and discuss program activities. This visit resulted in important program changes. First, recognizing the challenges of producing the series of scheduled information products, the website, introductory letter, brochure and initial research newsletter were all pushed back a month. More importantly, conversations with the GBNPP program liaison and the park superintendent determined that UW CFR’s role in SORC would be the design and production of information products while GBNPP would take the lead on interacting with stakeholders. Plans were shelved to develop strategies to reach out to key stakeholders (the SA process),

instead focusing on more generic outreach efforts in the short-term. This represented a significant shift in the originally envisioned program structure and function.

In summary, the establishment phase succeeded in moving forward the program brochure, while bogging down in other areas. The introductory letter and website failed to get off the ground despite repeated efforts to move forward. Efforts to schedule interactions with key stakeholders were shelved along with the SA process, and the UW CFR's role in the SORC program was redefined.

C. IMPLEMENTATION PHASE: JUNE – AUGUST, 2007

By this point, the original SORC work plan envisioned conducting scheduled outreach and communication activities with targeted stakeholders. In addition to outreach activities such as meetings, briefings and presentations, planned deliverables included Research Update #1 in June, and Research Update #2 in September.

In July 2007, it was announced that both the program liaison (the Agreement Technical Representative) and park superintendent would be leaving GBNPP over the course of the next few months. These developments hampered implementation activities (i.e. review of web materials and designation of target stakeholders for the brochure mailing) raising serious questions about SORC's future. In effect, there was limited capacity at GBNPP to make decisions concerning science outreach and communications activities under SORC.

3) PROGRAM EVALUATION

Program evaluation was seen as integral to the successful implementation and assessment of the SORC program. Evaluation is intended to improve program performance, and leads to increased accountability. Evaluation was also seen as informing decisions as to whether the SORC should be continued, modified, expanded, or terminated.

A. Reporting and Evaluation Process

In October 2007, GBNPP, in concurrence with UW CFR, decided to terminate SORC, making our evaluation goals somewhat atypical. Instead of providing guidance on how to improve or continue SORC, our primary goal is to generate lessons learned from program implementation experiences and to make useful recommendations to GBNPP regarding future outreach and communications activities associated with science-policy issues.

A brochure and web page content were developed under SORC, although the brochure was not distributed and web page not activated.

SORC did not complete:

- The stakeholder assessment, which was to identify program audiences, develop outreach strategies, and construct primary program messages
- The publication and distribution of three research updates (newsletters to be mailed to stakeholders and posted on website)
- A multimedia presentation
- A minimum of eight outreach presentations to target audiences
- Briefings and meetings with target audiences

B. Implementation evaluation

- **Stakeholder Assessment Process**

The SA was intended to be a strategic process, culminating in a consensus report that would identify key stakeholders, articulate outreach and communication strategies and salient program messages. Several meetings were held between the UW and GBNPP staff for the purposes of discussing stakeholders, strategies and messaging. Unfortunately these efforts did not result in final list of target stakeholders, strategies or message.

- **Development of salient messages and effective communication strategies**

Absent consensus on identification of targets, strategies and messages, the de facto approach targeted generic stakeholders via broadcast outreach methods (i.e. website and brochure). Given the fact that the SA process was not completed, the SA did not aid in the development of salient messages and effective communication strategies.

- **Establishment of communication channels and feedback mechanisms between research teams, GBNPP managers and stakeholders**

Communication channels and feedback mechanisms were not established between internal entities (research teams, GBNPP managers, and UW CFR program staff) and external stakeholders. There was no communication with stakeholders. Therefore, the program could not establish effective and efficient communication channels and feedback mechanisms with external stakeholders.

- **Information communication**

Of the six outreach and communication mechanisms developed, only the brochure was finalized. Failure to distribute the brochure stems from a failure to identify stakeholder targets, a byproduct of the SA process. Draft versions of a website and multimedia presentation were developed, but not finalized. No research updates were produced, and no outreach presentations were given to stakeholder groups, nor were any meetings conducted with stakeholders.

In the case of the other communication information products and mechanisms, information was not effectively synthesized or communicated. Draft versions of the website and multimedia presentation were developed. These efforts represent an attempt to synthesize program information. However, absent consensus on those products, it is difficult to characterize those efforts as effective. Barriers to effective message and information product development are discussed in the next section of this report.

C. Outcome Evaluation

As mentioned above, the failure to implement SORC activities necessarily led to failure in the achievement of overarching program goals. For example, failure to establish effective communication channels amongst scientists, UW CFR program staff, GBNPP managers, and external stakeholders prohibited the enhancement of stakeholders understanding of the GBNPP research program. In other words, the SORC failure is attributable to the inability to implement activities and objectives that were designed to lead to the achievement of program goals. The primary goal, to enhance the understanding of key external stakeholder groups who were "at-risk" of challenging GBNPP decisions, could not be accomplished absent communication or outreach to these entities.

Because many SORC activities were not implemented, the project budget at the UW CFR currently has an unexpended balance the management of which should be discussed by the PI and the ATR.

4) BARRIERS, PROBLEMS AND CHALLENGES

There were challenges in the realms of communication, collaboration and ambiguity surrounding the roles and responsibilities of the UW CFR and GBNPP involved in the failure to implement SORC activities. Although barriers are amorphous, and can be difficult to parse and separate, for the purposes of discussion this report places them into four distinct categories.

- A. Lack of shared vision of the program purpose and need
- B. Failure to finalize the stakeholder assessment process
- C. Communication and collaboration challenges
- D. Ambiguity over institutional roles and responsibilities

A. Lack of shared vision of program purpose and need

The purpose of SORC was to address a specific problem: the risk of stakeholder opposition to GBNPP management's forthcoming cruise ship policy decisions. SORC rationale called for focused outreach to stakeholders thought most likely to challenge future GBNPP cruise ship policy decisions. The primary messages conveyed by the targeted outreach efforts were intended establish a perceived link among key stakeholders between the science information being accumulated and the ultimate cruise ship policy decisions.

In hindsight, it appears that GBNPP did not embrace UW CFR's interpretation of the purpose and need for SORC. Nor did GBNPP support the means of realizing the program goals, i.e. the employment of targeted outreach to key stakeholders. Efforts should have been made very early in the process (prior to funding decisions) to clarify SORC's purpose and methods. In future similar efforts, the articulation of purposes and needs should originate from GBNPP, with the role of any collaborating institution being to refine these in-house perceptions into operable program goals.

B. Failure to finalize the stakeholder assessment process and follow program sequencing

As noted above, SORC was designed as a stepwise program. Because the initial design phase was never completed, progress through subsequent phases in the short time allowed by the task agreement was not possible.

Absent a focused internal discussion on audiences and messages, the program defaulted to more generic outreach and communication actions (i.e. the generation of the brochure and website). While these products have value, they do not fulfill the original task agreement goals.

C. Internal communications and collaboration

Developing consensus on program purpose and need, as well as conducting a collaborative process such as the stakeholder assessment (SA), requires frequent and effective communication efforts from program participants. SORC as designed envisioned frequent

communication between the Project Manager, GBNPP staff, and outside scientists doing work in GBNPP pertinent to cruise ship management policy. A primary objective was the development of ongoing effective and efficient communication channels and feedback mechanisms.

The fact that UW CFR is in Seattle, roughly 900 miles from Gustavus, is a barrier in the implementation of a program founded on close communication and collaboration. Absent the ability to frequently engage in face-to-face communication, program participants must rely on telephone and email correspondence. In addition, generating a team atmosphere with geographically disparate entities is also complex. Virtual teamwork, via telephone or the web, is difficult to implement successfully. The Project Manager often felt isolated and “out of the loop” on science policy matters. In hindsight, it may have been advantageous if the primary parties involved in SORC were co-located.

Intensive communications takes time and resources. The original project proposal may have overestimated the capacity of GBNPP staff and outside scientists to participate in frequent, intensive communication activities. While the Project Manager had a surplus of capacity to participate in interactive internal communications, GBNPP and other participants (science teams) did not.

E. Lack of clarity on roles and responsibilities

If collaboration is to work, all parties must be clear on their role and function. Ambiguity over roles and responsibilities contributed to implementation challenges in the SORC experience. According to Project Manager’s vision of roles and responsibilities, a “collaborative team” would set strategic direction for the program—for example-through the SA process. Audiences, strategies and messages would be developed in collaboration. UW CFR program staff would be responsible for facilitating program development processes and implementing strategic plans. Absent a collaborative approach, UW CFR did not have the expertise, or the legitimacy, to develop program messages.

The UW CFR was much better suited to conduct the strategic outreach processes envisioned in the original program design rather than the “generic” activities such as web site construction highlighted during program implementation. As an academic institution, UW CFR has expertise in policy processes, including the application of science information to decision-making. UW CFR can access expertise in brochure or web development, which became the focal areas of SORC over the course of implementation, but these are not tasks requiring academic expertise.

5) Recommendations

Based on the previous evaluation and discussion of barriers, we have developed recommendations for GBNPP concerning science communication:

A. Assess and discuss the need for outreach and communications activities

A significant challenge of the SORC program was the failure to generate consensus on the purpose and need for outreach and communication activities. Therefore, we recommend that GBNPP conduct internal discussions on the merits of conducting outreach and communication activities prior to embarking on further similar actions. Hopefully, this document will serve as a point of departure for that discussion.

B. Facilitate interactions between GBNPP and SAB prior to finalization of science

It is our understanding that the Science Advisory Board (SAB) will assess the current science processes and make recommendations to GBNPP leadership on the policy implications of those findings. Those recommendations will influence GBNPP decision-making process. We recommend that SAB and GBNPP entities interact prior to the release of findings and recommendations to ensure that parties are “on the same page” concerning the policy relevance of the science. In a sense, we are recommending preliminary internal discussions amongst scientists and policymakers to establish the “framework” of how the science findings and recommendations will be presented to clarify expectations and to prepare decision-makers for the science context of their decisions. This discussion could probably occur in a one-day “workshop” setting.

C. Internalize science outreach and communication activities

These recommendations call for GBNPP to be introspective in assessing science outreach needs and methods. If, in the future, GBNPP determines that it needs a website, or high-end information products, GBNPP should contract with professionals in product design thereby maintaining control over program messages and strategies. Is there a role for entities such as the UW CFR? This depends on what GBNPP’s outreach needs are determined to be. As originally envisioned, the SORC program was a good fit for an organization such as UW CFR. A university can bring neutrality, objectivity, legitimacy, and academic expertise to science-policy issues. More specifically, an academic institution can facilitate policy development and analysis, but is less suited for implementing public information or public affairs programs.