

Communications Workshop Report

Prepared by HDR
July 3, 2018





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Workshop Summary

The Upper Neuse River Basin Association (UNRBA) hired HDR to assist with the development of a communications approach to effectively engage key stakeholders in connection with the Falls Lake Nutrient Management Rules Reconsideration. To inform the development of a Communications Plan, UNRBA members participated in a half-day communications workshop. A series of exercises focused on the identification and prioritization of audiences, messages, and outcomes for the UNRBA’s communications efforts.

Outreach

UNRBA Executive Director Forrest Westall invited members to participate in the workshop via email. Participants were asked to take an online survey before the meeting to help focus the workshop’s agenda on high-priority needs. The email also included a draft communication plan created by City of Raleigh members for background and reference. Copies of the online survey and the draft communication plan can be found in attachment 1 (pages 6-12).

Attendees

Fifteen people attended the meeting. They represented the City of Durham, Durham County, the Durham Soil and Water Conservation District, the City of Raleigh, the Town of Stern, and Person County. Three of the UNRBA’s technical consultants participated as well.

Amy Stabler, HDR’s Project Manager, and Theresa McClure, HDR’s East Coast Communications Lead, facilitated the workshop. Adam Sharpe, HDR’s Utility Planning Practice Lead, also attended the first part of the workshop.

Meeting Agenda and Outcomes

The workshop was held on Tuesday, May 15, 2018, at Butner Town Hall in Butner, North Carolina, from 12:30 to 3:30 p.m.

Time	Agenda Item
12:30 p.m.	Welcome, Introductions, and Goals
	Discussion 1: Review of Survey Results
12:45 p.m.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Key messages• Key audiences• Internal communications
1:30 p.m.	Prioritization Exercise and Break
2:00 p.m.	Discussion 2: Crucial Outcomes, Key Tools



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Revisiting the Punchlines

2:35 p.m.

- Key messages
- Key audiences
- Crucial outcomes

3:15 p.m.

Next Steps and Action Items

Welcome, Introductions, and Goals

The workshop included a brief welcome and opening statements by Forrest Westall (UNRBA), Theresa McClure, HDR’s East Coast Communications Lead, and Adam Sharpe, HDR’s Utility Planning Practice Lead, introduced Amy Stabler, who had recently taken over the management of the communications project. Participants introduced themselves before Amy went into further detail regarding the purpose of the workshop.

Discussion 1 and Prioritization Exercise

Amy Stabler provided an overview of UNRBA members’ responses to the pre-workshop online survey (attachment 2, pages 13-16).

A round-robin discussion involving all attendees confirmed and fine-tuned the online survey results and provided additional information that the survey did not capture. Responses were recorded on flip-chart pages (attachment 3, pages 17-18). Before a short break, participants voted for the most important insights in each discussion category by placing three sticky dots by their items of choice. The Prioritization Exercise provided the following findings:

Tables 1 - 3: Highest Priority Audiences and Key Messages

Local Government Policymakers			
City and Town Councils / County Boards of Commissioners			
Why the UNRBA is working to change the Rules	The proposed path forward improves water quality while minimizing financial burdens	Success requires partners across the basin to maximize the results they can achieve given the resources available	We are the best deal in town, and investing in our efforts will be worth the reward

State Government Policymakers			
State legislators / the Governor			
Environmental Management Commission / Wildlife Resource Commission			
A basic understanding of the Rules	A basic understanding of the UNRBA’s proposed path forward	The basin needs practical solutions that will have tangible results	We need your participation

Public Interest Groups			
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American Rivers / Wake Up Wake County		
An effective approach to water quality will balance science, policy, and money	Through significant effort , basin jurisdictions have already made progress to improve water quality	The UNRBA and local jurisdictions are dedicated to the efficient use of organizational resources

Discussion 2

After the break, the focus of the workshop turned to crucial outcomes and desired communication tools. The facilitators posed questions on each topic to the attendees, who recorded their thoughts on a piece of paper. Responses were shared through round-robin discussion and refined in flip-chart recordings (attachment 3, page 19).

Crucial outcomes point to the things that the UNRBA will see as signs of highly successful communication efforts in the medium to long run. The following achievements and indicators gained the group’s consensus.

Social and Political Acceptance

The UNRBA must reach and engage its key stakeholders and audiences in order to gain social and political acceptance of new rules for Falls Lake nutrient management. *Social acceptance* implies an understanding that the reconsidered Rules are good for the basin, while *political acceptance* will be required no later than 2023 in order to adopt new rules.

Stakeholder Consent

To succeed, stakeholders to the rules reconsideration process must consent to the UNRBA’s approach. Members understood *consent* to mean a willingness not to block the reconsideration efforts.

Set the Standard for Collaboration

The UNRBA strives to set the standard for high-quality collaborative water quality management. Others – across the state and beyond – should look to the UNRBA as a model for success.

Catalyze Stewardship

The work of the UNRBA should catalyze environmental stewardship across the basin.

This discussion item also touched on **communication toolkit components** that attendees would find helpful in the medium- to long-term, especially in conjunction with their efforts to communicate the UNRBA’s work and value back to their home organizations.

In the immediate term, easily-digested, foundational information on the UNRBA, the Falls Lake Rules, and the goals of the reconsideration were repeatedly offered as high priority items. The



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information would be most useful to members in the form of handouts or FAQ sheets. Presentation tools and public-facing website improvements were also noted as high-priority communication methods for this kind of information.

Attendees also voice interest in tools for scheduled information-sharing, potentially including an annual report, quarterly reports, or monthly bulletins; a library of social media post language and graphics; accessible videos on key topics; and a suite of communication KPIs.

Punchlines and Next Steps

The workshop closed with a short recap of key findings and a summary of next steps, including the development of a communication plan reflecting the workshop outcomes.



Attachment 1: City of Raleigh Draft Communication Plan



Upper Neuse River Basin Association Communication Plan [DRAFT]

Background

Upper Neuse River Basin Association

The Upper Neuse River Basin Association (UNRBA) was formed in 1996 to provide an ongoing forum for cooperation on water quality protection and water resource planning and management within the 770-square-mile watershed. Seven (of the 8) municipalities, six counties, and local soil and water conservation districts in the watershed voluntarily formed the association.

Mission

The mission of the UNRBA is to preserve the water quality of the Upper Neuse River Basin through innovative and cost-effective pollution reduction strategies, and to constitute a forum to cooperate on water quantity and quality issues within the Upper Neuse River Basin through the following organizational **Goals and Objectives**:

1. Foster a coalition of units of local government, public and private agencies, and other interested and affected communities, organizations, businesses and individuals to secure and pool financial resources and expertise;
2. Collect and analyze information and data and developing, evaluating and implementing strategies to reduce, control and manage pollutant discharge;
3. Provide accurate technical, management, regulatory and legal recommendations regarding the implementation of strategies and appropriate effluent limitations on discharges into the Upper Neuse River Basin;
4. Provide a public forum to review and discuss innovative approaches to restore, protect & maintain water quality in Falls Lake;
5. Foster the creation of a robust and innovative trading program for nutrient credits with a transparent and accessible system for recording and maintaining nutrient offsets and credits;
6. Provide technical assistance for all jurisdictions;
7. Support the re-examination of the nutrient management strategy in the context of preserving water quality and aquatic life while minimizing the social and economic impacts of the nutrient management strategy; and
8. Acquire regulatory and community support for a revised nutrient management strategy and rules that complies with the Clean Water Act and is technically, logistically and financially feasible.

Local Governments within the Watershed

City of Creedmoor

Person County

City of Durham

South Granville Water and Sewer Authority

City of Raleigh

Town of Butner



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Durham County	Town of Hillsborough
Durham County Soil and Water Conservation District	
Franklin County	Town of Stem
Granville County	Town of Wake Forest
Orange County	Wake County

Board of Directors

Each of the 13 member jurisdictions in the watershed, the six county Soil and Water Conservation Districts collectively, and South Granville Water and Sewer Authority elect one Director and one Alternate Director to the UNRBA Board of Directors

Communication Steering Committee

[Members TBD]

Vision of the UNRBA Communication Plan

The development and implementation of a Communication Plan will result in a demonstrated increase in recognition, acceptance and support for UNRBA Goals and Objectives by decision makers on local, state and federal levels, members of the legislature, and the news media.

This communication plan provides a framework for communication activities and identifies objectives, target audiences, key messages and approaches and tools to be considered and applied at key points throughout the process. The application of the strategy is expected to evolve as additional opportunities to communicate with the public arise. The focus of this effort is to create opportunities to communicate with as many people as possible, representing a wide array of interest throughout the watershed.

The UNRBA Communications Steering Committee will advise and review all communication activities before released to the public. Advice will be sought from key interest groups at each stage in order to apply the best communication approach at the time it is needed. A wide variety of communication approaches in both digital and traditional forms (paper copies) will be used to ensure a greater engagement rate.

Mission of the UNRBA Communication Plan

To achieve a broader public acceptance and support for UNRBA Goals and Objectives among member governments, public and private agencies, and other interested and affected communities, organizations, businesses and individuals.

Communications Objectives

Target Audiences

The following audiences are included within the scope of this plan:

Government	Recreational Visitors (Tourists)
Residential Ratepayers	Environmental Interest Groups
Business Operators	News Media
General Public	Policy Makers



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It is expected that the target audiences will:

- Be aware of and understand the purpose of the UNRBA
- Raise the profile and celebrate the successes of the UNRBA
- Participate and have input through a variety of outreach opportunities
- Know who to contact or where to go for information
- Be aware and informed about the recommended actions of the UNRBA
- Increase opportunities for people to get involved
- Develop a more informed audience
- Foster a knowledge sharing environment about the watershed
- Support a revised nutrient management strategy and rules that complies with the Clean Water Act and is technically, logistically and financially feasible.

Key Messages

The following key messages apply to the initial stages of the process and will be updated as the process evolves.

- The UNRBA are working together for a healthy watershed
- Encourage change in social norms to benefit a healthy watershed
- Heighten awareness of the UNRBA and its involvement in the local communities, state and nation
- Educate stakeholders about the role and purpose of the UNRBA, the Monitoring Program, Nutrient Credit Program, and Falls Lake Rules

Strategy & Delivery Approaches

The UNRBA Executive Board and Communication Steering Committee acknowledge the need to apply a wide range of communication approaches (websites, social media platforms, twitter, Facebook, email and face-to-face meeting and door to door) to address the individual communication preferences in order to have conversations with people and gather information.

Communication approaches to be used include the following:

Website- Maintain a website primarily for outreach and information exchange. Used to complement other forms of communication

Blog - Create and manage a UNRBA blog to enable real time public comment, as well as interactive dialogue inside and outside the community.

Distribution List – Develop and maintain an email/mailling address distribution list

Social Media Platforms – Blogs, Twitter, and Facebook accounts will be created and administered by UNRBA. The appropriate links will be provided to create easy access to those interested.

News releases – Formal news releases will be prepared for key public events (workshops, open houses, community events and activities) and distributed to media outlets.



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Newspaper Ads – Advertisements in local newspapers will be placed for workshops, open houses, community events and activities.

E-bulletins/Newsletter – An e-bulletin (monthly or bi-monthly) will be sent to everyone that has provided an email address. Hard copies will be available at local gathering places (churches, stores) for those that prefer this approach. The bulletin will contain information on the status of the organizations plans, facts about UNRBA, upcoming events and information on ways to improve the health of the watershed.

Face to Face meetings – Meetings and presentations for both internal and external stakeholders will be promoted and conducted on request.

Basin Roundtable Engagement – Roundtables are an opportunity for grassroots engagement. Members will have the potential to act as ambassadors of the UNRBA in the communities they represent. Messaging and materials will need to be developed that members can disseminate and use in their conversations about UNRBA in their communities. UNRBA members will volunteer to be educational liaisons.

Speakers Bureau – Identify a small group of diverse spokespeople who can speak about the UNRBA in various forums across the state, nationally and internationally. This should engage all key partners whenever possible. Prepare a master calendar of events to capitalize on existing opportunities. Efforts will be made to line-up speaking engagements and prepare appropriate materials and trainings for spokespeople.

Media Relations - Establish an initial foundation of knowledge and awareness in the media with an immediate push through news releases, op-eds (opinion piece), media tours of projects, and other means, and to follow that with a steady stream of information. Official spokespersons will be designated to ensure UNRBA messaging remains clear and consistent.

Door-to-Door Campaigns – Door-to-door campaigns will be considered during the summer months as an approach to contact people across the watershed. Yard signs should be created and voluntarily placed in residents' yards promoting and supporting UNRBA key messages.

Workshops/Open Houses – Conduct scheduled events for public audiences to attend including public forums in which the public can learn about the UNRBA and its efforts.

Comment Sheets – Provide comment sheets at all workshops and open houses to provide an opportunity for everyone to provide their comments.

Surveys – Electronic surveys will be used to gather information from interested parties following or preceding open houses and workshops or other key events to ensure greater participation.

Communication Methods and Scope

Key communication activities are provided below. A timeframe of two years is proposed in order



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to allow time to engage the public and interested persons during two summer and fall seasons, 2017 and 2018. During the summer season, contact with most permanent and seasonal residential people as well as seasonal campers and visitors is expected. The spring and falls seasons enable contact with business operators (resorts, farmers, etc.) that are usually unavailable during the summer season.

Figure 1 provides a schedule of events for the two year period of the communication plan and highlights key events.

Figure 1

Media	Activity	Opportunity/Action
Electronic	<p>Environment and Sustainability web pages</p> <p>Use Social Media e.g. Twitter & Facebook</p> <p>Short videos on YouTube and website</p> <p>E-bulletin</p>	<p>Develop new content</p> <p>Requires frequent monitoring and daily output</p> <p>Opportunity to promote success of the UNRBA</p> <p>Requires regular news stories. Opportunity to amplify messages using national/international awareness days e.g. Earth Day, etc.</p>
Print and Promotional Materials	<p>Flyers, posters, transit marketing, leaflets providing more detailed information at designated information points within buildings to ensure materials are easily accessed</p> <p>Presentations that all members can utilize highlighting successful projects and upcoming initiatives and goals</p>	<p>Develop a suite of printed literature/materials; fact sheets, FAQs, brochures, posters, yard signs, etc.</p> <p>Create PowerPoint presentations</p>
Merchandising	Promotional giveaway items which support UNRBA key messages	Restaurant tray liners, ink pens and pencils; notepads; plastic cups; beverage coasters, etc.



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Training	Specific training for educational liaisons, volunteers, and UNRBA members	Training sessions on a variety of topics pertaining to watershed preservation.
Events and Campaigns	<p>Utilize calendar celebration events to promote UNRBA: February – World Wetlands Day, March – World Wildlife Day, International Day of Action for Rivers, International Day of Forests, World Planting Day April – Earth Day, Arbor Day May – Green Up Day, Bike to Work Day June – World Environment Day September – Clean Up the World Day, World Environmental Health Day, World Rivers Day October – International Day of Climate Action November – America Recycles Day</p> <p>Public meetings concerning projects</p> <p>Workshop/Lecture Series</p>	<p>Create informative outreach on a monthly basis relative to each monthly celebration.</p> <p>Opportunities for face-to-face dialog between the community and UNRBA</p> <p>Opportunity to educate stakeholders on the projects, and initiatives of the UNRBA</p>
Branding	Logo and templates with consistent look.	Ensure current branding is consistent and carried through all materials produced. If necessary work to develop a new look.
Conferences and Trade Shows	Vendor/Exhibitor *Supplement to Speakers Bureau	If members are already attending industry conferences and trade shows, consider being an exhibitor to promote UNRBA.

Budget



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Monies will need to be set aside in forthcoming budget.

Measuring Success

Success depends on the ability of UNRBA to effectively engage stakeholders through a variety of outreach tools. Strategic communications is everyone's responsibility. The following targets and metrics will be used to measure the success of the UNRBA's communication efforts over the next two years. These targets will be updated as the UNRBA evolves.

- One op-ed (opinion piece) published in newspapers or online publications, and UNRBA presentation to a broad-based community group occurs quarterly
- All appropriate UNRBA materials supplied to the basin roundtables and other identified groups are being distributed through member communities and networks
- The roundtable and public meetings are being utilized as public comment mechanisms. Comments are being received from each member and shared with the UNRBA

The UNRBA Communication Plan is a living document and will be reviewed and reevaluated by the UNRBA Communication Steering Committee on an as-needed basis, and if necessary adjusted.



Attachment 2: Online Survey Questions

Section 1 of 3

UNRBA Communications Workshop

Form description

Name *

Short answer text

Organization *

Short answer text

Do you plan to attend the communications workshop on Tuesday, May 13? *

Yes

No

Section 2 of 3

External Communication

Please answer these questions to the best of your ability. Your answers will be summarized in the aggregate during Tuesday's discussion. Individual answers will not be attributed to individual people.

The Association will invest some of its scarce resources in communication with external parties instead of applying those resources elsewhere. Why?

Long answer text



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The Association has many potential audience groups. What three audiences feel "make or break" to you as you consider the Association's efforts to complete and enact the recommendations from the Reexamination?

- Local government regulators
- Local government policymakers
- State government regulators
- State government policymakers
- Federal government regulators
- Federal government policymakers
- Academic institutions
- Business operators
- Public interest groups
- Land developers
- Tourists and recreational visitors
- Basin residents in specific, well-defined geographical areas
- Members of the basin's general public
- News media
- Organizations or individuals outside of the basin
- Other...

...

Imagine the Association were only able to reach three specific individuals, organizations, or groups with its communication efforts. Name the three you would select to give it the best chance of success.

Long answer text



Internal Communication

Description (optional)

How well are you communicating with your home organization about the Association's activities, needs, accomplishments, and priorities?

- Much less well than I would like.
- Somewhat less well than I would like.
- About as well as I would like.
- Extraordinarily well.
- I'm not sure.

Would investments to support your efforts to communicate back to your home organization help the Association achieve its goals?

- Yes, investment in this area would be impactful.
- Maybe. Investments in this area may or may not help the Association achieve its goals.
- No, we do not stand to gain much from investment in this area.
- I'm not sure.

How well do other Association members communicate with their home organizations?

- Much less well than they should.
- Somewhat less well than they should.
- About as well as they should.
- Extraordinarily well.
- I'm not sure.



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Would investments to support others' efforts to communicate back to their home organizations help the Association achieve its goals?

- Yes, investment in this area would be impactful.
- Maybe. Investments in this area may or may not help the Association achieve its goals.
- No, we do not stand to gain much from investment in this area.
- I'm not sure.

How well do appointees to the Association communicate with each other?

- Much less well than I would like.
- Somewhat less well than I would like.
- About as well as I would like.
- Extraordinarily well.
- I'm not sure.

Would investments to support appointees' efforts to communicate effectively with each other help the Association achieve its goals?

- Yes, investment in this area would be impactful.
- Maybe. Investments in this area may or may not help the Association achieve its goals.
- No, we do not stand to gain much from investment in this area.
- I'm not sure.

Would you like to elaborate on any of the answers you gave above?

Long answer text

Attachment 3: Meeting Flip-Charts

LOCAL GOVERNMENT POLICY

- * SUPPORT WATER QUALITY ^{+ MAXIMIZE RESULTS}
- * WHILE MINIMIZE FINANCIAL BURDEN
- * BEST INTEREST OF COMMUNITY IN MIND
- * ROLE OF THE UNRBA
- * PLANNING FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS
- * WATERSHED MANAGEMENT APPROACH ^{+ NEED}
- * FULL UNDERSTANDING OF THE RULES AND WHY ^{+ BENEFITS}

* A FULL UNDERSTANDING OF THE CURRENT AND FUTURE REALITY OF LAKE CONDITIONS

* CELEBRATION / RECOGNITION OF GOOD SCIENCE, INNOVATION AND COLLABORATION

* THE INVESTMENT IS WORTH THE REWARD

* THIS IS A COLLABORATIVE PROCESS, AND FAIR AND SCIENCE BASED (THE RESULTS WILL PROVE IT)
"OUR APPROACH IS REASONABLE"

STATE GOVERNMENT POLICY MAKERS

- * NEED PARTICIPATION TO BE SUCCESSFUL
"WORK WITH US"
- * STAY ENGAGED AND INFORMED
- * HELP US ENVISION A NEW REALITY
- * FOCUS ON SHORT TERM GAINS
- * BASIC UNDERSTANDING OF RULES AND DESIRED OUTCOMES
- * WE ARE LOCALLY ~~BEING~~ IMPLEMENTING THE STATE RULES AND LOOK FOR PARTNERSHIP AND BUY IN
- * WE NEED PRACTICAL SOLUTIONS WITH TANGIBLE RESULTS

* THIS IS NOT AN EFFORT OF BLAME

* WE ARE NOT TRYING TO GET OUT OF THE RULES, WE ARE LOOKING FOR REAL RESULTS LED BY SCIENCE

* WE LEAD WITH SCIENCE

KEY MESSAGES

PUBLIC INTEREST GROUPS

- Not Delaying or Rolling Back Regulations
- Under financial constraints, solve problems
- * Balancing Science, Policy, Money
- All Working To PROTECT ^{and consent} A FINITE RESOURCE
- * SIGNIFICANT EFFORT HAPPENING NOW
= Progress is being made
- USING SCIENCE TO REMOVE NUTRIENTS
- WE AGREE TOWARDS A COMMON GOAL
- ~~DATA~~ CLEAR AND REASONABLE

PUBLIC INTEREST GROUPS

- * Efficient USE of organizational RESOURCES (UNRBA & Local Jurisdictions)
- * Return on Investment
 - MONEY = RESULTS
- * CREATE PROGRESS

INTERNAL COMMUNICATION

* STORM WATER FEE COMMUNICATION AND BUDGETING

* BENEFITS: WHAT ARE WE GETTING: FREQUENT COMM

* Regular Meetings & annual reports

- NEEDS
- + Basic Foundational Documents
 - + ANNUAL REPORT
 - + Quarterly Report / Message
 - + Presentation Tool Kit
 - + Internal Resources
 - + Preprogrammed messaging KPI
 - + Monthly Bulletin
 - + Website
 - + Graphics
 - + Basic FAQ
 - + Video > Annual event

WHY COMMUNICATE

* Misunderstanding as to what the UNRBA does

- Scientific led
- clean water act

* Continuous Communications

necessary

- political changes
- * Sustained Efforts & Relationships
- * Simplicity in message
- * Best deal option
- * The understanding of schedule & timeframe

DESIRED OUTCOMES

^{Bold}
* Social + Political Acceptance ~~by 2023~~

* STAKEHOLDER CONSENT

* ^{Catalyse} CREATE STEWARD SHIP

* ~~Create~~ ^{set} the Standard

* ~~Set an example~~ ^{FOR} of collaborative water quality management