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Communications Plan prepared for the Ecosystem Indicator Partnership (ESIP) a committee of the Gulf of Maine Council on the Marine Environment

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I. Summary

The Ecosystem Indicators Partnership Committee(of Gulf of Maine Council on the Marine Environment) is in the process of releasing a set of on-line tools that for the first time show environmental indicators for the 2 province (New Brunswick and Nova Scotia) and 3 state (Maine, New Hampshire, Massachusetts) area.

The purpose of this communication plan is to develop and implement:

- 1) An outreach campaign for lawmakers and adults living in the Gulf's watershed to provide information about priority contaminants and the effects of lifestyle choices on the condition of the marine environment.
- 2) Increase understanding of coastal lawmakers, decision-makers, and managers working at the Gulf of Maine about how to apply ecosystem-based management to conserve and protect Gulf of Maine habitats and resources.
- 3) Educate legislators and their staffs on how to use the web based Indicator Reporting Tool to assist them in more easily obtaining data on the Gulf of Maine ecosystem to use in supporting legislation that will aid in preserving and protecting the Gulf of Maine habitats and resources.

II. Introduction

Today's media plans differ from those in the past due to the increased use of electronic media and the internet to locate and disseminate information both to legislators', businesses, and consumers. This plan takes into account this cultural shift in communication and also lays the ground work for search engine optimization which now exceeds all other forms of communications in terms of connectivity and reach.

Simple in structure, powerful in performance, the search engine provides the ability to link consumers, customers, stakeholders and influencers directly with the content they seek. Almost everyone online is using search in one form or another, making it the single most important online tool for connecting people to the information they need.

In direct proportion to this rise in search popularity, today's users have become savvier and more sophisticated in their search methods. One and two word searches are giving way to more specific multi-word entries. That means that the information a user retrieves is significantly more targeted to their needs, and the user is even more likely to have an interest. This means that all communications and web pages need to be optimized to contain those phrases and search terms that will most often be used by our target group of legislators and consumers

when searching for information on eco system based management and the Ecosystem Indicator tools for the Gulf of Maine. Please see Appendix 4 for a list of keywords that should be included in all articles, white papers, news releases and web copy regarding the ESIP project.

The Internet's enormity can be challenging to a small organization unless the some level of search engine marketing is employed. The search engine may be good at separating the wheat from the chaff, but without effective search engine visibility, it will be very difficult to find.

There are a few ways the Council can get into the "Search" game. Some are more expensive than others. For starters, you can buy advertising on search engines. This is often referred to as "Paid Search." Paid search works well, but it is not a perfect solution and not well suited to the messages in this plan. For one, today's savvy web user recognizes that search results in the "special box" are pay-for-play. To many, this is reason NOT to click. A recent study done by Penn State School of Information Sciences and Technology confirms this statement, having found that participants, during 80 percent of their searches, were more likely to click on "organic" links rather than sponsored ones.

If not paid search, then what?

III. Search engine optimization

Search engine optimization is a process by which information from the Gulf of Maine and ESIP tools web sites and other online materials are "tagged" in order to ensure that the information is more readily found by "natural search" results. It's a relatively simple equation. The higher online content ranks in a search, the greater the likelihood it will be accessed. The process of search engine optimization builds over time as more content is created containing appropriate terms and the web pages are designed to also be easily "spidered" by search engines. Although this process is outside the scope of this media plan the appropriate keywords and search phrases must be embedded in all communication vehicles. Keywords and phrases must be included in more traditional media activities like press releases to be optimized for search engines just like the website. See Appendix 4 for suggested terms and phrases.

IV. Goals/Objectives

- Identify the needs of lawmakers and their staff for information and delivery method
- Identify and describe the cultural differences between US and Canadian lawmakers
- Identify key messages and approaches for the state legislators', Canadian lawmakers and consumers living in the Gulf of Maine watershed

V. The Communication Process

The following diagrams depict the relationship among the communications, awareness, and action processes. The legislative process depicts the steps that Legislators use when selecting which bills to support for both the US and Canada. Legislative calendars are included in Appendix 1. The communications process depicts the steps that the Council needs to complete to convince legislative partners to support Ecosystem Based Management (EBM) through the individual bills that come up in their House and Senate sessions. Positioning the ESIP tools as the place to go for Gulf-wide information on the status and trends of contaminants, nutrients, coastal development, climate change, aquatic habitats, and fisheries is reflected in the message specific chart on pages 8&9.

The communications process outlines the key communication objectives that the Council must achieve to facilitate progress in promoting decision making using EBM decision making.

Communications process				
Awareness	Interest	Preference	Endorsement	Loyalty
		Knowledge and motivation building		

U.S Legislative Process								
Legislative member(s) identify the need and/or opportunity	The Bill is drafted and researched	The Bill is introduced by receiving a # and being placed on the calendar	The bill is referred to one of the Joint Standing or Joint Select committees in the originating branch and then sent to the other body for concurrence	When scheduled by the chairs, the committee conducts a public hearing where it accepts testimony supporting and opposing the proposed legislation from any interested party. Public hearings are posted weekly on the legislative calendar in the individual websites	When the bill is reported to the floor it receives its first reading and any committee amendments are adopted at this time. The committee reports the bill to the originating body as is, with amendment, with a divided report or with a unanimous recommendation of Ought Not to Pass.	A second reading of the bill is held. The next legislative day the bill is given its second reading and floor amendments may be offered.	The bill goes through a similar process. If the second chamber amends the bill, it is returned to the first chamber for a vote on the changes	After final passage (enactment) the bill is sent to the Governor for signature

Nova Scotia and New Brunswick Canadian Legislative Process (http://www.senatordonaldoliver.ca/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=70&Itemid=109)						
First Reading Legislative member(s) identify the need and/or opportunity	Second Reading Permits the main occasion for debate on the general principles of a bill.*	Third Stage most bills are then sent to Committee for a detailed clause-by-clause analysis	The fourth stage of the legislative process is entitled the report stage. In the Senate, the committee that has been examining the bill produces a report that is presented by the chairperson of the committee to the rest of the Senate	After passing report stage a bill then undergoes a third reading in the House where it originated. A vote is taken	As most bills originate in the House of Commons, it is at this stage where it is sent to the Senate.	The final phase of the legislative process in Canada is called Royal Assent. This is the formal and final method for completing the legislative process.

VI. The Media Plan and Messages

VI. The Media		Plan and	Messages
Communication Type/Media	Purpose	Audience	Key Messages
Newsflash Email - #1 ESIP Web tools are going live	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Introduce the Council and ESIP tools. ● Prepare employees for the upcoming training and messaging activities in the next 6 months 	All Gulf of Maine Council members and all of its stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What is Eco system based Management ● Importance to the region ● Who is the internal Council point of contact and Implementation Team ● Who to contact and where to go for more information
Email Bulletin #2 - Introduction to ESIP and benefits of program to legislators and consumers in supporting the goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Provide more information about ESIP tools and linkages to EBM ● Share the purpose and benefits of the ESIP website 	All Gulf of Maine Council Members and all of its stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Origin of Eco- system Based Management (EBM) ● Key Facts and indicators ● Benefits to the state, business and consumers ● Where to get more information
Email Bulletin #3 - Introduction to ESIP and benefits of program to legislators and consumers in supporting the goals of the Gulf of Maine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Provide more information on the ESIP website ● Share the purpose and benefits of the ESIP website 	All Members of the Legislatures and Senates of Maine, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Origin of Eco-Based Management ● Key Facts and indicators ● Benefits to the state, business and consumers ● Where to get more information
Personalized email campaign to legislators and all their staff members with link to educational webinar registration on Eco-system based Management NOTE: Appendices 2 and 3 of this document contains a list of all current members of all legislatures for the US and Canadian target audiences.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Provide legislative personnel more detailed information about the initiative ● Begin discussing how it will impact how they view environmental legislation ● Solicit involvement in and support of the ESIP indicator website for obtaining information ● Address questions and concerns 	All Members of the Legislatures and Senates of Maine, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Why we are implementing the ESIP indicator website ● What do the indicators tell you ● How to use the website to research legislation that may be affected by one of the key indicators ● What involvement/support we need from them
Education – live seminar with web based presentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Origin and use of Eco- system Based Management ● Key Facts and indicators ● Demonstration of the ESIP tool ● Benefits to the state, business and consumers 	All Members of the Legislatures and Senates of Maine, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia	six indicator areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● coastal development ● contaminants and pathogens ● eutrophication, ● aquatic habitat ● fisheries and aquaculture ● and climate change
Linking campaign to all associated environmental Web sites, Blogs and Councils' of interest in the geographic area.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Introduction to Gulf of Maine .org and also Gulf of Maine Times ● Introduce ESIP and benefits of program to legislators and consumers in supporting the goals of the Gulf of Maine 	All adults living in the Coastal Region	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Inform and Educate ● What involvement/support we need from them
Monthly Email update on matters of interest to legislators. I.e. specific bills that are coming up in their respective legislatures that will impact the environment Note: This step would require investment in a legislative tracking service.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Keep Legislators and Council management up to date on key activities and progress ● Provide additional conduit of the information to Council and specifically ESIP steering committee on bills of interest before the regional legislations 	All Members of the Legislatures and Senates of Maine, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Reinforce using Eco- System Based Management ● Reinforce using ESIP tools for research in support of bills with environmental impact

Communication Type/Media	Purpose	Audience	Key Messages
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Keep Legislators informed Influence legislators and their staff to consider bills with environment ma impact using Ecosystem Based Management (EBM)management Consult the ESIP website for the latest indicators of environmental health of the region 	Legislators in the Coastal regions of Maine, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vote for policies and bills that : Maintain effective controls on sewage treatment plants Avoid or reduce Runoff from agriculture and new development or redevelopment Restrict septic system use Support Riparian buffer zones Support policy regulating agricultural use of fertilizer and animal waste Support Soil Nitrogen Testing (N-Testing) for farmers and organic farming
Preserve and Protect the Gulf of Maine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Avoid the use of Fertilizers Encourage legislator s to: maintain effective controls on sewage treatment plants Avoid reduce Runoff from agriculture and development, pollution from septic systems and sewers, and other human-related activities increase 	Consumers living in the Coastal regions of Maine, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Preserve and Protect Health Join or create an environment group Here are current ones Examine your own use of fertilizers Reduce reuse recycle Volunteer to clean up a waterway

VII. Next Steps

- The first step in implementing the communication plan is to determine a budget for the promotional and educational campaigns set out in this plan.
- Of primary importance is the development of the email based initiatives, press releases and the development of the educational seminar and webinars' needed to educate legislators on the ESIP Tool.
- Lastly, to fully realize the benefits to the Watershed of Ecosystem Based Management (EBM) it is recommended that the Council undertake to purchase a legislative tracking service for both the US and Canada so that weekly bulletins can be prepared alerting legislators of bills which have environmental impacts.

VIII. Appendix

1. Legislative Calendar Overview for the US
2. List of all Legislators and their email addresses for Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire
3. List of all Legislators, committees and their contact information Nova Scotia and New Brunswick
4. List of Keywords to be integrated into the Gulf of Maine Website, communications and registered with appropriate search engines