# **Communications Plan STATE Tree Farm Committee Effective: DATE RANGE**

# Step 1: Identify Your Objectives

**Ask yourself:** What are you trying to accomplish with your communication(s)? What does our audience need to know or do?

**Remember:** Goal(s) should be clearly stated and agreed to by all parties. Goal(s) should be strategic, measurable, achievable, realistic and timely (S.M.A.R.T.).

**Helpful hints:** An effective campaign requires focus. If you try to do too much, you won’t do anything well.

**The goal/objective(s) of our communication is:**

# Step 2: Choose and Assess Audience

**Ask yourself:** Who are you trying to reach? What should they know? Why should they care?

**Remember:** Know your audience and communicate with them at their level. Woodland owners are a diverse group of people with varying interests and goals, and what works for one region or community may not work with another.

**Helpful Hints:** The “general public” is not a target audience. If you try to reach everyone, you’ll end up reaching no one.

**Our audience is:**

# Step 3: Develop Your Messages

**Ask yourself:** What is the value you offer to your audience? What can you say to your audience so that they will take notice, listen, and be moved to action? What’s in it for them? What do you want your audience to do?

**Remember:** The difference between messaging that sounds good and messaging that effectively moves an audience to action can be huge. Let go of personal bias and listen to your audience.

**Helpful Hints:** Stay on top of what’s current and interesting to your audience and keep your messages relevant.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Audience** | **Message(s)** |
|  |  |

# Step 4: Select Materials and Channels

**Ask yourself:** Where might you encounter your audience and what tools will you use to reach them? Where does the audience currently get its information? Who/what does the audience find credible? Where does the audience spend time and what will get their attention?

**Remember:** People generally need at least three exposures to a message before they hear it, and even more exposures before they will take action (like sign up for an event, complete an online survey, etc.). In order to be most effective, your communication strategy should include multiple exposures to your audience.

**Helpful Hints:** Materials are things like postcards, brochures, posters, PSAs, advertisements, and events. Channels are things like mail, radio, television, newspaper, billboards, social media, Websites, community groups.

**List the channels and materials you will use:**

# Step 5: Establish Your Time Frame

**Ask yourself:** What are the key milestones and dates for this campaign? Are there any important dates that your audience needs to know about? When might you need to start communicating in order to meet those dates? How long will it take to develop messages and materials? Who will develop the messages and execute the communications?

**Remember:** Always give yourself more time than you think you need.

**Helpful Hints:** Start with a list of activities. For each activity, identify the steps (in order) that will lead to completion. Assign a budget for each step. Assign someone to complete each step. Working backwards from the activity completion point, assign a date for each step.

**Activity 1:**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **List of Steps** | **Cost** | **Assigned To** | **Completed By** |
|  |  |  |  |

# Step 6: Develop Your Budget

**Ask yourself:** How much money do you have to make it happen? What communication activities can you do within your budget? What are your budget constraints? What can you do for little or no cost? What activities will give the biggest bang for the buck? Are there partners who can help?

**Remember:** Tailoring your messages to a targeted audience is crucial, especially when dealing with little to no budget.

**Helpful hints:** Think about seeking help from an individual or organization with communications expertise who will donate their time. Search for pro bono consultants or even interns majoring in communications or marketing from a local college.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Activity** | **Total Activity Cost** | **Notes** |
|  |  |  |

# Step 7: Success Indicators

**Ask yourself:** How will you know if your messages have been successful? How will you know what wasn’t successful? What can you correct or do differently to achieve greater outcomes?

**Remember:** Investing in campaign evaluation is worthwhile and may help you gain credibility with partners.

**Helpful hints:** Your success indicators should directly reflect the SMART objectives and goals you developed in Step 1. Track your progress on your communications to ensure you don’t duplicate efforts and to identify patterns of what resonates with your audience.

**Our indicators of success include:**