

Section 5

Public Outreach

Over the last several years, public involvement in port environmental issues has grown dramatically. Port communities have become more sophisticated in their understanding of environmental issues, and have become increasingly vocal in their response to real and perceived impacts associated with port operations. Ignoring community concerns significantly increases the risk that the community leaders or regulatory agencies will either disapprove, or significantly change, a development project. Also, there is greater risk of third-party lawsuits related to day-to-day port operations. Conversely, community input can have significant positive impacts on a project's design and implementation.

Recognizing these risks, ports are looking for more creative approaches to environmental protection, and are seeking the active involvement of community stakeholders. These new approaches require flexibility in identifying real environmental concerns and developing cost-effective mitigation measures that satisfy community needs.

Key to the success of any public involvement program is getting the port's public relations or communications department involved early and often. Whether the target audience for communicating or obtaining buy-in on environmental efforts is the media, environmental community, business leaders, or port employees, the port's public relations staff is likely to have already-established relationships with key stakeholders and can help direct the port's public participation. In addition, a port can utilize positive public efforts made by port staff who live within the effected communities.

A successful public participation program offers long-term benefits to ports since an educated public tends to be more realistic in its approach and expectations of a port's existing operation and future projects. Getting public approval from the onset can pay substantial dividends in the long term.

5.1 Types of Outreach Programs

There are two main types of public outreach programs discussed in this section:

- **Public Relations.** Public relations outreach programs are intended to promote positive public awareness of port programs related to environmental protection. These programs can be as simple as issuing press releases about port environmental protection actions such as promoting awareness of endangered species, mitigation efforts, the installation of new treatment or control systems, or simply good environmental stewardship. They also can be as extensive as working with local schools or community groups on cooperative education programs.

- **Project - Related Public Involvement Programs.** Project-related public involvement programs generally relate to developing the public's understanding of development projects such as installation of new facilities or redevelopment projects that may involve increased emissions, traffic or noise. This type of program is also proactive, and usually focuses on a single project. It includes a variety of outreach efforts designed to understand and deal effectively with community and regulatory agency concerns for a particular project.

Outreach programs and the resources devoted to them vary widely from port to port. Some ports have extensive "proactive" outreach programs with frequent meetings, and other have "reactive" programs that begin when new projects are started or major new issues have arisen, usually in the media. The type of approach is strongly dependent on the port's relationship with the community, the extent of its community relations activities, and the nature of the community. Regardless of the approach, community outreach is an essential part of any port's operation for its long-term success.

5.2 Guidelines for Public Outreach

Listed below are the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's "**Seven Cardinal Rules of Risk Communications**" as guidelines for public outreach, especially on controversial environmental issues that impact human health or safety.

1. Accept and involve the public as a legitimate partner
2. Plan carefully and evaluate your performance
3. Listen to the public's feelings
4. Be honest, open and frank
5. Coordinate and collaborate with other credible sources
6. Meet the needs of the media
7. Speak clearly and with compassion.

In addition, ports suggest that successful public outreach involves the following common elements:

- **Identify and Involve Stakeholders Early.** Successful outreach programs involve an open and cooperative process, and are developed to balance participation by all stakeholders — surrounding community organizations and associations, industrial users, and local, regional, state, and federal regulatory agencies often in the form of a Task Force or Committee. It is essential to identify all stakeholders and keep them informed through newsletters and informational bulletins throughout the process. In addition, it is critical to define the degree to which public input will be used in the decision-making process.
- **Define the Process, Goals and Standards.** Early committee meetings should be devoted to defining the outreach process, identifying the natural and social resources that are of concern to the community and the standards that must be met by the project.

- **Educate the Stakeholders.** Ports should strive to assist committee members in remaining informed on all phases of the process. This results in more realistic expectations of the methodology and results of the program. Use print material, visuals, videos, on-site tours, or presentations by appropriate port or agency staff to deliver your message.
- **Allow Participants to Voice Their Concerns.** It is likely that committee members will be from diverse backgrounds and education levels, and will enter the process with different goals and objectives. It is essential to provide an open forum for discussion of all points of view. This allows committee members to claim ownership of the objectives, methodology, and results of the process. Some ports are now recording and photographing meetings to provide an accurate record of the process.
- **Remain Flexible.** Over the course of the public participation process new issues may be raised, or new agencies or associations may be invited to join the committee. It is essential to remain flexible to new ideas. However, these additions can have dramatic effects on the process and approach of the program. Thus, some committees institute a policy that allows existing members to approve and vote for new members.
- **Allow Sufficient Time to Conduct a Thorough Program.** Careful advance planning is required to ensure that sufficient time is available to address all stakeholder concerns in a reasonable fashion. In some cases, additional time must be built into schedules to allow assimilation of new data or issues. The additional time will prove invaluable as committee members are more willing to claim ownership if they are provided sufficient time to ask questions and gain an understanding of the data.

5.3 Public Outreach Case Studies

This section presents examples of public outreach programs that have been successful at ports throughout North America. Each case study includes a description of the program.

5.3.1 Community Relations Case Study

CANAVERAL PORT AUTHORITY

Program Description: Endangered Species Protection

Canaveral Port Authority has conducted various environmental programs involving the community for a number of years. Three examples include a Manatee Protection Program; Sea Oats and Beach Grass Distribution, and a Right Whale Protection Program.

Canaveral Port Authority implemented a Manatee Protection Program designed to increase awareness and provide protection for this endangered species. The program is directed to port tenants, commercial shipping interests and recreational boaters. The Port is committed to providing structural improvements to the piers to enhance manatee safety and has requested that tenants improve shipboard fenders. Key elements of the Port Canaveral Manatee Protection Program include improvements to the port's fendering system, grating of storm

water outfalls to prevent manatees from entering, and implementation of an education awareness program for Port users.

Canaveral Port Authority also developed a broad-based education/awareness campaign to make commercial and recreational Port users aware of the presence of the Northern Right Whale, the world's most endangered whale. The whales use the waters along Florida's East Coast as their primary calving grounds. In June 1993, the National Marine Fisheries Service proposed to establish a Right Whale critical habitat along the eastern coastal areas of the U.S. Port Canaveral responded to the critical habitat designation by implementing a protection program to prevent ship strikes and encourage reports of whale sightings through an established siting network. The Port's program resulted in a significant increase in awareness and knowledge of how to identify and avoid Right Whales, and saved several whales from being struck by ships during the calving season.

Program Description: Aid for Beach Erosion

To mitigate down drift erosion, the Port sponsored several large scale beach restoration projects. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers asked Canaveral if they were interested in purchasing any portion of the 65,000 sea oats or beach grass plants. The plants had to be planted quickly or would perish. Canaveral agree to purchase all 65,000 plants. Local agencies planted a number of the sea oats and bitter Panicum, leaving 39,200 plants to Canaveral to distribute. The Port put an ad in the local paper advising that the plants were free of charge, and the last 39,200 plants were given away within two hours. All 65,000 seedlings were planted on the beach dunes.

5.3.2 Public Relations Case Studies

PORT OF SEATTLE

Program Description: Magnuson Center

In Washington, one in four jobs depend on international trade. International trade is integral to its economy. It affects the life of each student in Seattle, and will shape many of their careers. Yet despite the importance of international trade to the economy, Seattle schools do not explicitly prepare students for life in the world of trade, and offer very few opportunities for students to undertake work-based learning experiences that span countries and cultures.

The Magnuson Center is a collaboration of the Port of Seattle and Metropolitan King County. It strives to bring the world of trade alive in the classroom and to provide work-based learning opportunities for high school students. The Magnuson Center offers a variety of programs and projects. Curriculum at the high school level is modeled after the Harvard Business School case study method. By using simple stories, or case studies, built around the everyday components of international trade, thousands of students are exposed to trade through real people in real jobs. The Port of Seattle hopes its innovation can eventually be utilized to create School-to-Work programs in other fields as well.

Program Description: Boomerang Box

The Port also uses as a teaching tool the “Boomerang Box,” a decorated cargo container which is chronicling its journeys on the World Wide Web. As part of the Boomerang Box, high school students learn about the people that make international trade happen. The Boomerang Box web site (www.apl.com/boomerangbox) features “people profiles” that provide a window into the international trade workforce. Some of the people profiles are written by students based on their interviews of those professionals. In the first three months of the program, the Web site received over 70,000 hits from teachers and students all over the world.

Program Description: Job Shadowing

The Port’s next step is to bring students to the Port to meet the people who work in the diverse area of international trade. One of the best ways to help a student learn about a job is to have him or her spend some focused time with someone doing that job on a daily basis. The Port plans to pioneer a new approach to job shadowing: to make job shadowing experiences easier for professionals, more meaningful for students and teachers, and more clearly tied in to the normal curriculum. Each job shadowing day will involve approximately 30 students and will last approximately two to three hours.

The program includes three principle elements designed to make the experience student driven, engaging and useful: Preparation, production and presentation.

Preparation: Coming prepared is essential. It means that the students are invested in the experience and much more likely to get a lot out of the relatively short time they spend at the work place. In advance of their visit, students receive information about the person with whom they will meet. Included in these materials is a challenge that employee faces on the job. The students come prepared to discuss that challenge and through discussion offer possible solutions to the problem.

Production: The day of the job shadowing begins with a general Port presentation and video about Port facilities and Port education programs. Then the students break up into small groups to meet with their assigned Port employee. They spend an hour with this person, discuss the job challenge, exchanging ideas about approaches and solution to the challenge and generally learning more about the Port employee, his or her job, and the pathway s/he took to get that job. When students return to school, they prepare a short “case study”, or a story about the person and the job they learned about at the Port.

Presentation: When students return to the classroom, they share their experiences with others by making a short presentation about what they learned during their job shadowing experience.

JACKSONVILLE PORT AUTHORITY

Program Description: Classroom on Wheels

Many port public outreach programs are designed to educate the community on port maritime operations. Jacksonville Port Authority's Classroom on Wheels program, created in 1996, is designed to educate both school children and the public on the port's operation and career opportunities. The Port's classroom is actually built with donated parts inside a 40-foot container on a chassis, and contains a video theater and photographs of the Port's maritime and aviation activities. The unit is requested by schools, neighborhood summits and county fairs, and is used at Jacksonville's Port Fest, held every two years.

5.3.3 Public Buy-In Case Studies

PORT OF PORTLAND

Program Description: Swan Island Air Quality Project

Residents on the bluff surrounding Swan Island sought help from the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) concerning perceived high levels of chemical emissions from nearby industrial facilities. DEQ, with no authority to undertake a comprehensive study, asked major industrial users on Swan Island to conduct a voluntary evaluation of their emissions and the potential for exposure and health impacts on residents in the area.

On a voluntary basis the Port of Portland not only agreed that there were environmental, political, and business reasons to undertake the study, but also funded a two-year community involvement program. The Port was determined to pursue data in a conscientious and careful manner that made the conclusions irrefutable and unchallengeable. The program has been described as an excellent example of how industry, government and community groups should work together.

The strength of the community program was built on the premise of direct and early involvement of all interested parties in a Task Force. The Task Force consisted of the Port of Portland, Cascade General, Inc., DEQ, and three neighborhood associations. One of the goals was to have Task Force members "buy in" to the objectives and methodology of the studies being conducted regarding marine facilities and their impact on the environment, the costs of environmental studies, defining what can and cannot be accomplished by the study, and what constitutes a good result. To assist the Task Force members, the Port retained the services of two outside experts - a toxic air health expert from the Harvard Medical School and an environmental issues communication expert.

This voluntary outreach program resulted in the following:

- The shipyard operator, Cascade General, agreed to eliminate certain paints, improve practices and change operational technologies which resulted in a substantial reduction in the type of toxic air pollutants emitted.

- DEQ agreed to use this program as a model for technical and community input in its design of a state hazardous air pollution program. The agency's knowledge of ambient air pollutant modeling was increased, thereby making similar future projects more cost effective.
- The public is better educated and understands what can or cannot be achieved from environmental studies in what the Port calls "Trust Banking." Trust Banking leads to improved relations with neighborhood associations and public agencies that hopefully will translate into successful dealings involving the Port's future expansion programs.

PORT OF BELLINGHAM

Program Description: Bellingham Bay Demonstration Pilot Project

After 100 years of commercial and industrial activity along Bellingham's historic waterfront, the community of Bellingham, Washington, is facing the environmental consequences of that prosperity. The Bellingham Bay Demonstration Pilot, known as the *Baywide Pilot*, is a cooperative partnership working to streamline clean-up of contaminated sediments in Bellingham Bay.

By bringing together 14 government and industry organizations which have a stake in the bay, along with the residents and businesses of the area, it is hoped that improvement in the overall health of Bellingham Bay can be made faster and at a lower cost. The Baywide Pilot is funded by a grant from the Washington Department of Ecology and co-managed by the Port of Bellingham.

Key public outreach components include: an introductory open house-style information fair at Bellingham Cruise Terminal; a speakers bureau for community briefings at meetings of local governments (City, County, Port), tribal councils (Lummi, Nooksack), and business and civic groups; a media relations plan (editorial board meetings, calendar and story news releases, public service announcements, media kit); web page information; publication of scoping notice in State Register and local newspapers; scoping workshop at Bellingham Cruise Terminal (1,200 community members invited); dissemination of informational articles written for identified community newsletters and publications.

Public participation plan is designed to inform and involve community members and stakeholders in the *Baywide Pilot* - a multi-interest project focusing on a coordinated, streamlined approach to addressing sediment clean-up, source control, habitat restoration, and aquatic and shoreline land use planning issues. To address the varied needs of the community, information is produced and distributed in a variety of formats (from general summaries and fact sheets to comprehensive reports). Opportunities for input and feedback range from informal discussions to formal workshops and meetings.

This public participation process, which combines the requirements of NEPA, the state environmental policy act (SEPA), model toxics control act (MTCA), and the Clean Water Act, is a blueprint for future Port projects. The Bellingham Bay

Demonstration Pilot sets the framework for cleaning up historical contamination while laying the foundation for future environmental activities in Bellingham Bay.

PORT OF HOUSTON AUTHORITY

Program Description: Beneficial Uses Group (BUG)

In early 1990 a major consideration in the Port of Houston Authority's planned widening and deepening of the Houston Ship Channel was how to dispose of large volumes of dredged material in the face of widespread public concern. In order to determine the best possible uses, the Port chaired the Beneficial Uses Group (BUG), a subcommittee of the Interagency Coordination Team established by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers that included five Federal agencies, two state agencies, the Texas General Land Office and the Port.

The BUG was formed to recommend disposal plans that utilize dredged material in an environmentally sound and economically acceptable manner that incorporate other public benefits into its design. The Port hired a public relations firm to help communicate the BUG process and resulting plan.

Suggestions for beneficial uses of dredged material were solicited from the public during workshops, public meetings, meetings with local municipalities, through public announcements, direct mail and print media. Presentation materials on the beneficial uses plan included a technical slide presentation, general public video, brochure, and visual displays. The public coordination effort resulted in identification of more potential uses for dredged material than the total material available for construction. Based on suggestions from the public, a final disposal plan was developed by the BUG and accepted in July 1994.

The Port of Houston Authority and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers then constructed the 220-acre demonstration marsh using dredged material. They used criteria developed by the BUG to identify key environmental and design parameters and the management requirements needed to establish and sustain the marsh. The monitoring phase of the marsh is underway. The Demonstration Marsh currently provides important nesting habitat for terns and skimmers.

The Port gained valuable construction experience to permit refinement of the process. Information gained throughout the life of the demonstration project will be used in the development and management of 4,250 acres of marsh to be created from dredged material from the Houston Ship Channel.

5.4 AAPA Environmental Improvement Awards

Since 1992, the AAPA has conducted an Environmental Improvement Awards competition designed to seek out and recognize efforts by ports to improve the physical and natural environment. There are four project categories:

- Environmental Enhancement
- Mitigation

- Community/Public Involvement
- Comprehensive Environmental Management

The submittals for the past six years can provide ports with other effective public outreach programs. The announcement for the 1998 competition, which includes a summary of the 1992 - 1998 winners, is shown in **Appendix E**. Readers may contact AAPA for more detailed descriptions of all submittals.