

Rainwater Basin Joint Venture Strategic Communications Plan



2016-2020

Prepared by

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The Rainwater Basin lies within the narrowest portion of the Central Flyway. This 160-mile wide region is a landscape of shallow playa wetlands scattered amid flat or gently rolling loess plains. It is a linchpin in the lifecycle of migrating waterfowl and shorebirds. When it began operations in 1992, the primary objective of the Rainwater Basin Joint Venture (RWBJV) was to halt and reverse the loss of Rainwater Basin wetlands and ensure adequate habitat for the migrating birds that continue to depend on this region. While the RWBJV remains focused on the wetland-habitat needs of migrating waterfowl and shorebirds, the RWBJV mission now includes conservation efforts for all priority bird habitats throughout Nebraska's mixed-grass prairie region. The RWBJV remains committed to cooperatively working with to improve habitats upon which so many birds depend.

The mission of the Rainwater Basin Joint Venture is to provide high quality wetlands and associated uplands, located principally in the Rainwater Basin region of Nebraska, of sufficient magnitude and distribution to optimize the contributions of these habitats to the well being of waterfowl and other migratory water birds, and grassland birds.

For more information: rwbjv.org

Five-Year Strategic Communications Plan

The purpose of the Strategic Communications Plan is to focus RWBJV outreach and communications innovatively and strategically for the next 5 years. This plan will be a tool to advance the RWBJV Implementation Plan and the partnership. The Communication Plan will further aid the RWBJV in meeting the "Desired Characteristics for Joint Venture Partnerships" related to Communications, Education, and Outreach (Appendix A). The plan's implementation section and capacity recommendations will position the RWBJV to immediately begin "implementation" of the plan upon its completion.

Communications Workgroup

We would like to acknowledge the staff and partners that contributed to this plan. The Communications Workgroup included Niki Messmer (Chair), Laurel Badura, Marlene Faimon, James Husbands, Ted LaGrange, Joanna Pope, Jill Shannon, Shanda Spurgeon, and Randy Stutheit, as well as Management Board liaisons Tim McCoy and Bob Bettger, and the RWBJV Coordinator Andy Bishop.

Recommended Citation

Dayer, A. A. (2016). *Rainwater Basin Joint Venture Strategic Communications Plan 2016-2020*. Available at www.rwbjv.org

Executive Summary of the Strategic Communications Plan

The RWBJV has developed a Strategic Communications Plan for 2016-2020 that follows a strategic communications planning approach. This plan will guide the communications efforts of the RWBJV staff and contractors, in collaboration with the RWBJV Communications Workgroup, Technical Committee, Management Board, and other partners. The plan is focused on helping the RWBJV address these four goals, based on its Implementation Plan:

- Goal 1. Increase community support & understanding of RWBJV mission
- Goal 2. Strengthen and broaden the partnership
- Goal 3. Conserve, restore, and enhance wetlands & grasslands on public lands
- Goal 4. Conserve, restore, and enhance wetlands & grasslands on private lands

The plan was informed by a **discovery phase**, assessing the state of RWBJV communications; a **needs assessment**, where the Management Board, each of the Workgroups, and the staff discussed opportunities and needs for communications; and an **audience assessment**, which involved interviews with individuals representing the RWBJV's key audiences; feedback from the Management Board, Technical Committee, and Workgroup members; and reviewing the results of a statewide recreation survey (see Appendix).

Communications campaigns were designed for each goal based on the information gathered from the audience assessment interviews. Target audiences, communications objectives, messages, and tactics and tools were defined for each goal. Evaluation metrics were identified for each of the primary tools, as well as an implementation timeline and budget.

Audiences were identified as those whose actions will influence achievement of a goal. These audiences include natural resource professionals. Audiences also include private landowners, agricultural producers, agricultural services industry, foundations, policymakers, citizens, hunters, and wildlife viewers.

Communications objectives were created for each of the goals with the emphasis on behavioral objectives (or, potential actions that audiences would take) that would advance the communications goals. In order to achieve behavioral objectives, knowledge, attitudes, and skills objectives must be achieved as well. They were also identified. Based on the objectives, several primary messages were designed to inform constituents and influence their behaviors to help achieve each goal.

Tactics and tools are recommended for each of the four goals and their associated communications objectives and audiences. The tactics and tools span a variety of approaches to engage audiences. Recommendations for how to design and deliver each of these 17 prioritized communications tools are included in the plan.

Evaluation allows for determination of whether communications objectives have been met and offers feedback for adapting further communications to be more effective. The evaluation metrics and tools are outlined and should be developed in concert with the communications tactics and tools.

Table of Contents

Five-Year Strategic Communications Plan.....	ii
Introduction.....	1
Communications Campaigns.....	1
Goals.....	1
Audiences.....	1
Communications Objectives & Messages.....	1
Tactics & Tools.....	4
Timeline.....	10
Evaluation.....	11
Rough Estimated Costs.....	13
Appendix A. Background to Strategic Communications.....	15
Capacity Building & Approach to Engagement.....	16
Appendix B. State of RWBJV Communications Prior to the Plan.....	17
Appendix C. Assessment of Needs for Defining 5-Year Goals.....	20
Nominal Group: Opportunities for RWBJV Communications.....	20
Appendix E. Communications Objectives.....	25
Appendix F. Desired Characteristics of a JV Matrix for Communications, Education, and Outreach.	38
Appendix G. Resources.....	40

Introduction

The communications plan is intended to guide the communications efforts of the RWBJV from 2016-2020. It follows a strategic communications approach (for more information, see Appendix A). The plan is informed by a review of the past RWBJV communications strengths and weaknesses (Appendix B), a needs assessment workshop (Appendix C), and an audience assessment (Appendix D).

Communications Campaigns

Goals

The communications plan is designed to aid the RWBJV in addressing four goals, based on the RWBJV Implementation Plan:

- Goal 1. Increase community support & understanding of RWBJV mission
- Goal 2. Strengthen and broaden the partnership
- Goal 3. Conserve, restore, and enhance wetlands & grasslands on public lands
- Goal 4. Conserve, restore, and enhance wetlands & grasslands on private lands

Audiences

Audiences for RWBJV communications are defined as those with the potential to influence RWBJV goals (Table 1). These audiences include natural resource professionals, such as the RWBJV Management Board, RWBJV Technical Committee, RWBJV Workgroup members, public lands managers, private lands biologists, US Fish and Wildlife Service, Nebraska Game and Parks Commission, and the Natural Resources Conservation Service. Audiences also include private landowners, agricultural producers, agricultural services industry, foundations, policymakers, citizens, hunters, and wildlife viewers. Certain organizations within an audience group or certain individuals within an organization may vary greatly in their potential to accomplish RWBJV goals.

Communications Objectives & Messages

A communication objective is intended to influence behavior of an audience, which may first require raising awareness (knowledge change), then increasing concern (attitude change), then developing appropriate abilities (skill change), to obtain the ultimate action (behavior change). For more information, see Appendix E.

Below are the behavioral objectives by audience and goal (Table 1). The knowledge, attitudes, skills, and behavioral objectives for groups of audiences for each goal are listed in the Appendix E.

Table 1. Audiences and behavioral objectives for each goal.

Goal	Primary Audiences	Behavioral Objectives (actions taken by audiences)
Goal 1. Increase community support & understanding of RWBJV mission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Citizens -Hunters -Viewers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1.1. Supports implementation of conservation programs and policies. 1.2 Offers non-financial support for (wetlands & uplands) habitat conservation.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Policy-makers (Congress, OMB, DOI, FWS, USDA, FSA, NRCS, State Legislators, and County Commissioners) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1.3 Promotes and advocate for (wetland and upland) habitat conservation, programs, funding, and policies. 1.4 Is neutral or non-confrontational with regards to programs and policies.
Goal 2. Strengthen and broaden the partnership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Management Board -Workgroup members -Tech Committee 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2.1 Actively participates in Management Board, Tech Committee, and Workgroups. 2.2 Contributes to the science and habitat priorities of the partnership. 2.3 Communicates to those in your organization about the RWBJV. 2.4 Advocates for human capital and financial resources for the RWBJV (nationally, regionally, locally).
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Agricultural services -Industry foundations -Sand County Foundation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2.5 Engages with the partnership.
Goal 3. Conserve, restore, and enhance wetlands & grasslands on public lands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Public lands managers -USFWS -NGPC 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3.1 Improves management of wetlands & grasslands. 3.2 Provides forage for birds during migration. 3.3 Communicates with appropriate audiences (e.g., local government, communities, general public) with regards to management actions and desired outcomes. 3.4 Adds targeted, selective lands (from willing sellers) to the public lands base. 3.5 Provides satisfactory recreational opportunities.
Goal 4. Conserve, restore, and enhance wetlands & grasslands on private lands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Landowners -Producers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4.1 Participates in conservation activities (e.g., restore wetlands, manage invasive species, grassland and riparian habitat enhancement) 4.2 Incorporates grazing to diversify their operation. 4.3 Incorporates wetlands into their operations. 4.4 Enrolling in conservation programs (e.g., landowner agreements, easement programs, acquisition programs,). 4.5 Is neutral or non-confrontational with regards to programs and policies.

Goal	Primary Audiences	Behavioral Objectives (actions taken by audiences)
	-Private lands biologists -NRCS -Agricultural services industry -Bankers	4.6 Directs producers to the most appropriate set of programs available to meet both habitat and farm operation objectives. 4.7 Encourages landowners to participate in conservation activities & enroll in conservation programs. 4.8 Assists producers with a streamlined enrollment process. 4.9 Develops and delivers tools to benefit wetland and grassland restoration and demonstrate economic viability.
	-Landowners	4.10 Accepts wetlands and conservation programs on private lands in their communities.

Messaging. Overarching messages for each goal are below (Table 2). Additionally, each of the knowledge and attitudes objectives (see Appendix D) have been written so in order to easily provide the basis for more specific messaging.

Table 2. Overarching messages by goal.

Goals	Overarching Messages
Goal 1. Increase community support and understanding of the RWBJV mission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -The Rainwater Basin (a 160-mile wide region) is the focal point of spring migration for millions of migratory birds. -This migration is highly valued and fascinating to people, especially birdwatchers, hunters, and local residents. -Migratory birds rely on playa wetlands for food and a place to rest. -Playa wetlands also recharge the Ogallala Aquifer, which provides drinking water and groundwater for irrigation. -The Rainwater Basin Joint Venture (RWBJV) is a partnership of people and organizations that work together to conserve migratory birds and the habitats the birds rely on. -The RWBJV is known for its close working relationship with private landowners, which produces on-the-ground conservation outcomes. -The RWBJV is an effective and efficient partnership, leveraging millions of federal and non-federal dollars to implement on-the-ground conservation outcomes relative to funding. -You can take action to support bird and habitat conservation.
Goal 2. Strengthen and broaden the partnership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -You, the partners, are the Rainwater Basin Joint Venture (RWBJV). -A strong partnership will benefit all partners and bird and habitat conservation in our region. -The strength of the partnership comes from the active participation on the Management Board, Technical Committee, and Workgroups. -RWBJV partners are committed to supporting current partners, but also embrace and seek opportunities to engage new, non-traditional partners. -RWBJV works closely with landowners and considers their involvement in the RWBJV critical. -You can “make a conservation difference” by engaging with the RWBJV.

Goals	Overarching Messages
Goal 3. Conserve, restore, and enhance wetlands & grasslands on public lands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Habitat conserved, restored, and managed on public lands contributes to continental needs for bird populations and to other services, such as groundwater recharge. -Communicating effectively with key audiences about habitat management on public lands ensures its success. -Connecting willing landowners with the RWBJV ensures opportunities for conservation in key areas. -Managing and marketing public lands for hunter satisfaction, bird watching, and other recreational experiences can lead to recruiting and retaining conservation supporters.
Goal 4. Conserve, restore, and enhance wetlands & grasslands on private lands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Ninety-nine percent of the Rainwater Basin region is privately owned. -A wide variety of voluntary conservation programs are available to landowners. -The RWBJV works with landowners to find programs that fit into their operation and to develop new programs when needed. -Conservation programs can provide funds, labor, and/or equipment. -Conservation activities can result in more wildlife on your land and financially benefit your operation. -The RWBJV works hard to make sure programs are a win-win for landowners and conservation. -The RWBJV understands that taking the time to build relationships with landowners is a worthwhile investment.

Tactics & Tools

A variety of tactics and tools exist to contribute to achieving the RWBJV’s communications objectives. In considering the appropriate tactics and tools for this Strategic Communications Plan, we reviewed the RWBJV’s current use of tactics and tools and also recommended whether tactics and tools would be appropriate for the RWBJV to use in the future. We additionally considered information about the tools from the interviews and a communications planning feedback form sent to the Management Board, Technical Committee, and Workgroups. We then linked the tactics and tools that the Workgroup felt would be most appropriate with each of the goals and its objectives and key audiences (Table 3). The fifteen key tools are one on one communications; opinion leaders; Management Board, workgroup, and Technical Committee (TC) meetings; annual seminar; tours of demonstration sites; website; email; Coordinator updates; E-newsletters; year-end report; participation in other groups’ meetings; GIS tools; content for others’ websites or social media or listservs; direct mail with phone follow-up; and radio interviews. Additionally, social media (e.g., Facebook) and YouTube videos will be considered once plan implementation is underway (within 2-3 years).

Table 3. Communications tactics and tools prioritized to contribute to achieving communications objectives for audiences.

Communications Objectives	1.1-1.2	1.3-1.4	2.1-2.4	2.5	3.1-3.6	4.1-4.4	4.5
Tactics and tools	Citizens, hunters, viewers	Policymakers, Agency leadership	Mgt. Board, Work Group, Tech Comm.	Agricultural services industry, foundations	Public land managers	Landowners, producers	Private lands biologists, NRCS, agriculture services industry, bankers
One-on-one		3		3		3	3
Opinion leaders				1		2	2
Board, workgroup, TC meetings			3				
Annual seminar			3	1	1	1	3
Tours of demonstration sites	1	3			3	2	3
Website	1		1	1	1	1	1
Email		1	1	1	1	1	1
Coordinator updates			3				
E-newsletters		2	2	2	2		2
Year-end report		3	3	3	1	1	2
YouTube Videos	1				1	1	
Participation in other groups' meetings				3	1	3	1
GIS Tools					3		3
Content for others' websites or social media or listservs	3					3	1
Direct mail with phone follow-up						2	
Radio	1					2	
Facebook	1					1	

Scale: Highest priority (3), higher priority (2), high priority (1)

Designing & Delivering Tactics and Tools

While we created broad recommendations for the design and delivery of each tactic and tool, when implementing this plan and selecting the tactic or tool for delivering messages for a given audience, the RWBJV should consider:

- Will the tool reach the audience and likely lead to achieving the goals and objectives?
- Will it transmit the message(s) well?
- Is there an existing tactic or tool available for our needs that we could use or edit?
- Is it cost effective and affordable to create this tool? Will it take a reasonable amount of time?
- Does the RWBJV have the experience or skill for this type of communications? Or does a partner who could collaborate on the effort?

Recommendations:

- **One-on-one communications:** One-on-one communications are essential for nearly all goals. For example, successful communications with policymakers and agency leadership requires building relationships through regular face-to-face meetings. Likewise, building new relationships with those in the agricultural services industry and foundations will require meetings with key individuals. Working with landowners and producers also requires building personal relationships, often through multiple meetings over time. For these one-on-one communications, members of the RWBJV staff and key Board and Workgroup members will be delivering the communications.
- **Opinion leaders:** An opinion leader is a well-known and trusted individual that has the ability to influence others on the subject matter for which the opinion leader is known. We suggest cultivating opinion leaders primarily in the agricultural services industry and among landowners and producers. These opinion leaders can help encourage their peers to work with the RWBJV on conservation. To cultivate these leaders first requires finding individuals who are respected by their peers and willing to advocate about the conservation work of the JV. Then it will be necessary to work with these leaders to provide them with the training or communications tools they require to communicate with others about the RWBJV.
- **Board, Technical Committee, and Workgroups meetings:** The Management Board, Technical Committee, and most Workgroups already meet regularly in person. These meetings allow partners to work together, discuss and solve challenges, and guide the work of the RWBJV. The meetings additionally provide an opportunity for fostering these groups' connection with the work of the JV and their relationship with partners. For the Workgroups that are less active or poorly attended, we suggest evaluating how to improve attendance and buy-in. For example, it may be necessary to find a better meeting time, or for the Workgroup members to redefine the purpose of the Workgroup and their meetings.

- **Annual informational seminar:** RWBJV will continue to host its popular annual informational seminar. The seminars should be assessed to determine how the design, marketing, and evaluation can be improved. To encourage better participation by landowners and agricultural services industry professionals, we recommend an added, new seminar (or day added onto this seminar) targeted specifically at their needs and topics of interest. Existing evaluation surveys should be revised following the evaluation recommendations in this plan. Also, actions to improve response rate might be taken, including a time in the agenda to complete the survey and a prize drawing for those who complete the survey.
- **Tours of demonstration sites:** Tours of habitat management demonstration sites fall into two primary categories: those for policymakers and agency leadership (goal 1), and those for land managers, landowners, producers and those who work with landowners (goal 4). The Communications Specialist should help enhance the existing approach and marketing for tours, aiming for more attendees and media coverage. The tours should be hosted in coordination with partner organizations, or, in the case of landowner and producer tours, with associations or groups who regularly host well-attended events for these audiences. These co-hosts can help with marketing and logistics. We suggest using the manual for leading field tours, available through the national Joint Venture website (designed by San Francisco Bay Joint Venture), as well as learning from other Joint Ventures experienced in leading tours. It is found here: <http://mbjv.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/How-To-Host-a-Tour-v201506.pdf>
- **Website:** The website (rwbjv.org) should be thoroughly revised and updated to ensure that the messaging and content will contribute to the implementation of this communications plan. Website content that is currently available through pdf should be made into web content so web search engines are more likely to find it. Some recommended changes to enhance functionality include: fleshing out the menu and adding a “search within site” box. The resources also need more explanation. Suggestions from the partners (see Appendix D) should be considered. More effort should be directed at ensuring that the website is accessed, by “pushing” audience members to the website with the Coordinator Update, e-newsletter, and communications through other partners’ websites, etc. New material should be added to the website. In addition, the website should be updated regularly to avoid becoming quickly out of date and stagnant, without regular attention.
- **Coordinator updates:** The RWBJV email to the internal audiences of the Management Board, Technical Committee, and workgroup members should be continued, on a quarterly basis. We suggest updating the technology for these emails, using Mail Chimp. A Mail Chimp template should be created specifically for these communications. Sending the email using Mail Chimp will also allow for better management of the mailing list and evaluating the readership of these updates.
- **E-newsletter:** An e-newsletter for all other audiences should be created, also using Mail Chimp. We recommend sending this newsletter 3-4 times/year. Unlike the Coordinator update, the e-newsletter will be written by a variety of authors, including JV staff and partners. The articles should cover an array of messages and topics of interest to the audiences. They should also focus on success stories of interest to these audiences. To create the e-newsletter, these steps should be followed:

- Mail Chimp should be used, which allows mail list management and analytics to track readership;
 - Develop an email list (starting with the email list from the seminar) so the e-newsletter can reach audience members associated with nearly every goal;
 - Revisit the email list on an annual basis to ensure it includes key individuals, as well as include an e-newsletter sign-up function on website and in each issue;
 - Include a couple of catchy sentences and pictures for each piece to draw readers to the website to read the full article.
 - Track the content in the e-newsletter to ensure that it covers the breadth of interests of the readers.
- **Year-end report:** This annual report should:
 - highlight conservation needs in the region, successes of the RWBJV partnership, and key results and findings;
 - provide summary statistics to emphasize the strength of partnership activities and the results of research;
 - showcase example projects where a strong partnership was necessary to get the work done (including quotes from partners in this manner); and
 - provide examples where science has been applied to conservation in the RWB region.

The year-end report can be distributed digitally using Mail Chimp and linked to the website, to track its readership. A designer can develop a template for the annual report that can be populated annually. It should have a similar look and feel to the website and any other RWBJV products. Additionally, it can be handed out in hard copy to agency leaders, policymakers, and Management Board members.
- **YouTube videos:** The use of videos should be considered in 2-3 years, after other priority tools are developed.
- **Participation in other groups' meetings:** Participating in meetings attended by key audiences (e.g., agricultural services industry) can be an ideal way to develop new relationships. It can be particularly valuable to present at these meetings to ensure that the RWBJV is visible to attendees. As a first step, it will be necessary to determine which meetings are most important to attend to help accomplish goals. Being strategic in selecting those meetings will ensure that the staff time allocated to attendance is worthwhile. It may also be helpful to identify which Management Board members or other partners already attend these meetings and might be able to represent the RWBJV.
- **GIS tools:** The RWBJV produces GIS tools that help key audiences (e.g., private lands biologists) make better decisions about their conservation activities. Tools are only worthwhile if they are used, so it is important that the RWBJV continue to track how web-based tools are used and consider how to make them more usable. Improvements might include enhancing the way the tools themselves are presented, or developing companion communications (e.g., e-newsletter articles or a factsheet to handout at a meeting) that direct potential users to the tools and help them use them (e.g., step-by-step tutorials or success stories of organizations who used the tools).

- **Content for others' websites or social media or listservs:** To communicate effectively with large audiences of citizens, hunters, viewers, landowners, and producers will require working with partner organizations who are accustomed to reaching these audiences. For example, the bureaus reach wildlife viewers, and they are interested in information for their websites and brochures about bird watching and bird conservation. As another example, the state fish and wildlife agency reaches hunters, viewers, and citizens with its social media and other tools. Providing content that meets shared goals of the RWBJV and these partners can provide a win-win. As a first step, it will be necessary to determine the key outlets and reach out to their communication staff to determine how to best work together. One obvious way to collaborate is when the RWBJV publishes an e-newsletter article that would be of interest to a partners' audience, the Communications Specialist should edit (if needed) this communication and ask the partner to share it.
- **Direct mail with phone follow-up:** Direct mail to landowners and producers, targeting a key area for landowner sign-ups, has been useful for the RWBJV. After the letters are sent, individual phone follow-up calls are made by private lands biologists. Working with other JV staff, the Communications Specialist should help develop new language for the letter based on discussions with private lands biologists, landowners, and reviewing other organizations' letters.
- **Radio:** Radio is a key tool for reaching landowners and producers. Spots on popular radio shows can be secured for no cost, by developing a relationship with radio stations and pitching content that might be of interest.
- **Facebook:** The use of social media, such as Facebook, should be considered in 2-3 years, after other priority tools are developed.

Timeline

The development of these tactics and tools will require support from communications professionals (either from partner organizations or through the hiring of additional capacity with a Communications Specialist Contractor). Additional communications contractors may be hired for web development and graphic design. We developed a suggested timeline for implementation of these tools (Table 4) that should be revisited annually in the communications planning process.

Table 4. Suggested implementation timeline, showing effort allocation by communications contractors or staff on each of the tools, in the next 5 years.

	1/16-9/16	10/16-9/17	10/17-9/18	10/18-9/19
Educational				
One on one	high*	high*	high*	high*
Opinion leaders		medium	medium	medium
Annual seminars	N/A	medium	medium	medium
Tours of demonstration sites	low	high	medium	medium
Informational				
Website	high	medium	low	low
Others' websites, social media, listservs			medium	medium
Email	medium*	medium*	medium*	medium*
Facebook				medium?
Coordinator updates	medium	low	low	low
E-newsletters	high	medium	medium	medium
Year-end report	N/A	medium	medium	medium
YouTube video				medium?
Radio		medium	low	low
Direct mail with phone follow-up	medium	low	low	low
Organizational				
Board, workgroup, TC meetings	medium*	medium*	medium*	medium*
Other groups' meetings	low*	low*	low*	low*
Technical				
GIS tools	medium*	medium*	medium*	medium*

Level of activity/attention to tool - high, medium, or low

* - implemented by other staff (not requiring communications staff capacity)

Evaluation

Each tactic and tool should also be evaluated to assess its effectiveness, leading to improvement of the tactic and tool and to guide development of new products. The evaluation should include proximate evaluation (e.g., how many audiences reached, how many news articles published, how many web site hits, etc.) as well as ultimate evaluation (e.g., change in attitudes/behavior, increase in knowledge, decrease in bird disturbance in nesting area) measures. Given that ultimate evaluation tends to require more resources, we suggest that proximate evaluation tools be implemented first. Then ultimate evaluation be conducted after a couple years of investing in a communications tool, such as the website, if it is determined that such evaluation is needed.

The objectives table in this plan can guide evaluations with given audiences, and Table 5 below can guide evaluations of key tactics and tools that will address multiple goals.

Table 5. Suggested proximate and ultimate evaluation measures and associated tools for some of the primary communications tools.

Tools	Proximate Measures	Ultimate Measures	Evaluation Tools
Annual Seminar	-Increase in attendance overall -Increase in agricultural industry's attendance -Seminar covers variety of key topics associated with communications objectives	- 75% of respondents report satisfaction with seminar - 75% of respondents report learning key knowledge and skills targeted for seminar -75% of respondents report planning to attend again in future - 50% of respondents report behavioral objectives targeted for seminar	-Attendance record tracking -Content tracking spreadsheet -Online survey of participants
Tours of Demos (Landowners)	-Increase in attendance overall -Increase in landowners' attendance -Tour covers variety of key topics associated with communications objectives	- 75% of respondents report satisfaction with tour - 75% of respondents report learning key knowledge and skills targeted for tour - 50% of respondents report behavioral objectives targeted for workshop	-Attendance record tracking -Online survey of participants
Tours of Demos (Policymakers)	-Increase in policy-makers' attendance -Tour covers variety of key topics associated with communications objectives	- 75% of respondents report satisfaction with tour - Stronger relationships with policymakers (as indicated by responsive to communications from JV, reach out to JV with questions on policies)	-Attendance record tracking -Informal one-on-one debriefing with participants

Tools	Proximate Measures	Ultimate Measures	Evaluation Tools
Website	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Number of website visitors is maintained or increases each year. -Amount of time website visitors spend at website increases each month. -Number of pages website visitors view increases each month. -Key content webpages have high visitation (in the top 10 pages visited) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 75% website users report finding information they are looking for. - 75% website users believe website to be easy to use. - 75% website users report increased knowledge about the JV and its activities after visiting website. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Google Analytics (proximate) – review twice/year. -Online survey on website (ultimate) – after 2 years of revision of website (send through enews)
E-News & Coordinator Updates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -E-news content covers variety of key messages -More than 30% (JV average) of recipients open e-news -More than 40% of e-news readers click on 1 article to read in full. -Number of e-news readers increases each month. -Requests to be added to e-blast distribution list increase. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 75% e-news readers report finding interesting information and well-written articles. - 25% e-news readers sign up for other activities listed in the e-news and report reading about it there. - 75% e-news readers report increased knowledge about JV and its activities after reading blasts. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -E-news content tracking spreadsheet - E-news program tracking function or Google Analytics (proximate) – review after each e-news. -Online survey of e-news list (ultimate) after 2 years of e-news
Year-End Report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -More than 40% of report distribution list opens report within two weeks of emailing report link. -Staff, Board members, and Technical Committee members each distribute more than 10 reports/year. -75% of partner organizations respond to solicitation for content in annual report. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 75% report readers report finding information useful to their work. - 75% report readers indicate report is easy to read. -25% report readers pass it on to others to learn about JV. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Google Analytics to track who receives and opens email with report, who clicks on link to read it (proximate) – after each report. -Online survey of email distribution list that received report (ultimate) after 2 years of reports.
Direct mail with phone follow-up	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Number of letters sent -Number of phone calls made -Number of phone calls reaching someone 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 10% landowners calling when receive letters - 30% landowners who are willing discuss on the phone - 5% of landowners who enroll in program advertised 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Tracking form

Rough Estimated Costs

In order to design and deliver the communications tactics and tools described above and conduct necessary evaluations of efforts, the RWBJV will need support of communications professionals. Rough estimated costs were developed for FY 2016 (partial year), 2017, and 2018 communications efforts, including the number of hours for priority tactics and tools by year. There are two options for hiring communications capacity to support the plan: 1) fully implement the Communications Plan, or 2) partially implement the Communications to minimize costs. With either option it is likely that a web design and graphic designer will be needed in addition, on a contract basis. Estimated costs were created based upon an hourly rate of an entry to intermediate level contractor as the communications specialist (\$30/hour) and a typical hourly cost from a web or design firm (\$100/hour).

Table 6. Rough Estimated Costs

	Fully Implement Communications Plan	Implement Communications Plan Thriftily	Web Designer	Graphic Designer (& Print)	Travel	TOTAL for fully implement
FY 2016 - second half	# contractor hours	# contractor hours				
Tours of demos	100	20	0	0		
Website	160	60	32	0		
Coordinator Update Template	24	8	12	0		
Edit, enter content Coord. Update	24	12	0	0		
ENews Template & Process	24	12	10	0		
1st ENews Issue	80	40	0	0		
Direct Mail	40	16	0	10		
Communications Comm. Chair	80	32	0	0		
Additional Needs (TBD)	16	8				
Participate in JV CEO Team	40	40				
TOTAL - hours	588	200	32	10		
TOTAL - cost	\$17,640	\$6,000	\$3,200	\$1,000	\$3,000	\$24,840

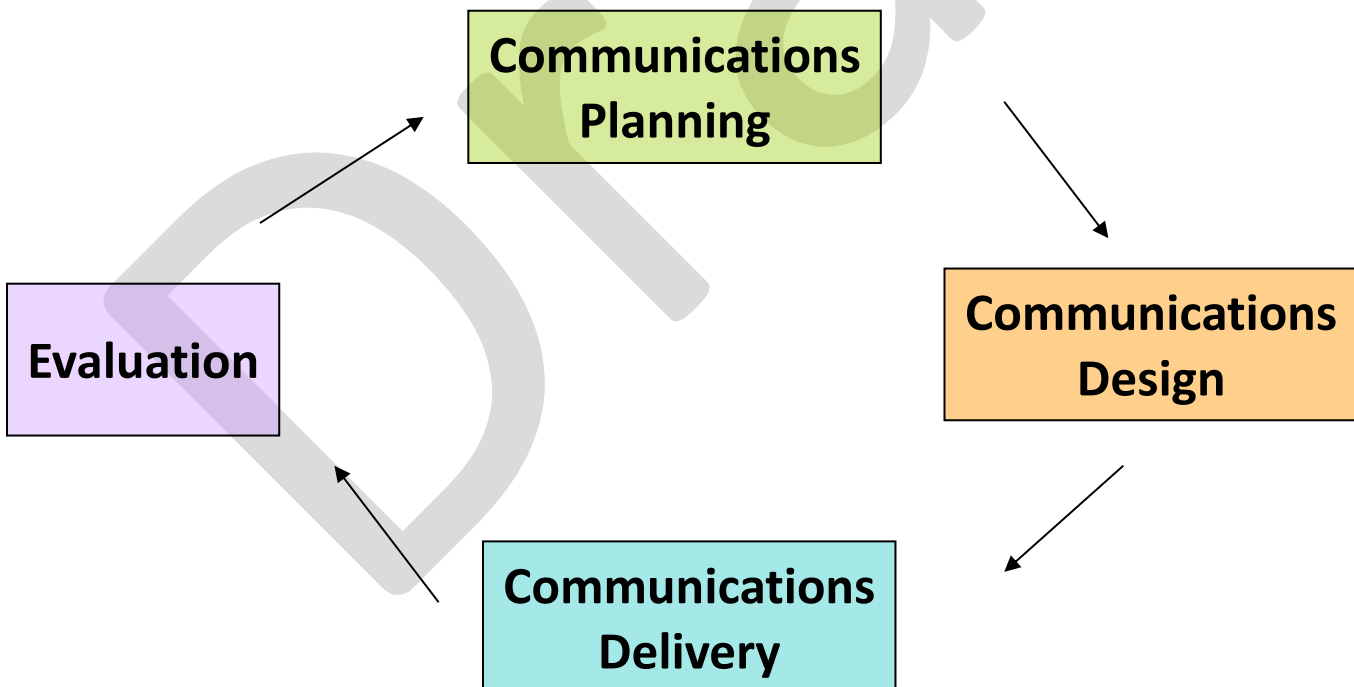
	Fully Implement Communications Plan	Implement Communications Plan Thriftily	Web Designer	Graphic Designer (& Print)	Travel	TOTAL for fully implement
FY 2017						
Annual Seminar	160	60	0	0		
Tours of demos	120	80	0	0		
Website	80	40	16	0		
Edit, enter content Coord. Update	40	20	0	0		
ENews Issues	240	120	0	0		
Year-End Report	80	40	0	12		
Radio	80	40	0	0		
Direct Mail	40	16	0	0		
Communications Comm. Chair	80	32	0	0		
Evaluation	120	60	0	0		
Additional Needs (TBD)	120	60				
Participate in JV CEO Team	60	60				
TOTAL - hours	1220	508	16	12		
TOTAL - cost	\$36,600	\$15,240	\$1,600	\$1,200	\$3,000	\$42,400
FY 2018						
Annual Seminar	140	80	0	0		
Tours of demos	100	60	0	0		
Website	60	40	16	0		
Others' websites & social media	80	40	0	0		
Edit, enter content Coord. Update	40	20	0	0		
ENews Issues	200	120	0	0		
Year-End Report	60	30	0	12		
Radio	60	30	0	0		
Direct Mail	40	16	0	0		
Communications Comm. Chair	80	32	0	0		
Evaluation	120	60	0	0		
Additional Needs (TBD)	180	90				
Participate in JV CEO Team	60	60				
TOTAL - hours	1220	528	16	12		
TOTAL - cost	\$36,600	\$15,840	\$1,600	\$1,200	\$3,000	\$42,400

Appendix A. Background to Strategic Communications

Communications is a process of idea exchange and imparting information. In effective communications, others understand you and you understand others in return. The audience is defined as the receiver of the message that a source wishes to communicate. Yet, the audience also becomes a source of messages back to the original source. Adapting to the feedback from an audience greatly improves communications efforts.

Strategic communications integrates communication efforts with all of the work of the RWBJV. In strategic communications, the planning process allows for prioritization of biological (or overall) objectives of the RWBJV that should be addressed through communications efforts. Identification of the key audience(s) necessary to address the overall objective of the RWBJV then allows for development of the communications goals and objectives. Developing appropriate communications objectives by audience involves extensive audience assessment in order to fully understand the audience and the most effective means to communicate with them. These communications objectives lay the foundation for the messages of the communications campaign, as well as the tactics and tools, which together compose the communications design phase. The communications delivery involves the implementation of the tactics and tools, through the appropriate channel to the target audience. Evaluation is the monitoring phase for the communications campaign, providing information on results and how the effort might be improved, which adaptively feeds back into communications planning.

Figure 1: Strategic Communications. Adapted from Bogart, Duberstein, & Slobe (2009).



Capacity Building & Approach to Engagement

The strategic communications approach employed for this plan's development emphasized engagement and participation of staff, members and key stakeholders. In line with the RWBJV's culture of partner collaboration, the Management Board, staff, and other partners played a critical role in developing the plan. They attended workshops, participated in teleconferences and web-conferences, provided feedback as part of the audience assessment, and reviewed drafts of the communications plan and its components. This "engagement" approach not only ensures a more relevant and useful communications plan, but also helps to build the communications and strategic planning capacity of the RWBJV, and the communication skills of board, staff, and partners.

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Appendix B. State of RWBJV Communications Prior to the Plan

Communications at RWBJV is guided by a workgroup whose responsibilities are:

- Link to Technical Committee and push issues up to the level that they can be dealt with.
- Develop a web-based newsletter.
- Coordinate information delivery, help organize RWBJV Informational Seminar and Research Symposium, develop JV calendar and table talkers.
- Maintain and keep current the county JV “Partners to Call” list.
- Develop a communication plan that meets the vertical and horizontal communication needs of the JV.
- Explore and develop new avenues of outreach, communication and education to the JV community including private landowners.
- Identify and elaborate communication “needs”, i.e. man-power, financial, etc., to be addressed by the Management Board.

In 2011 the JV created a communications plan. It included 4 goals:

- Promote knowledge, understanding, and support of Rainwater Basin habitat conservation among target audiences.
- Encourage Rainwater Basin landowners to participate in habitat conservation.
- Promote the Rainwater Basin Joint Venture as a reliable, cooperative, and capable partner in habitat conservation.
- Help Rainwater Basin Joint Venture partners work together more effectively.

The audiences were landowners, residents, outdoor “users”, local and state news media, government entities, partners and potential partners, other JVs and conservation organizations, and researchers. The relationship between the audiences and the goals was not delineated; nor were messages divided by goal or by audience. The tools recommended were website, informational brochures, flyers, and factsheets, one-page summaries of private lands projects, partner e-newsletter, coordinator updates, articles in newspapers, magazines, and partner newsletters, radio spots, Implementation plan, and bird lists. The techniques were news releases, tours and events, informational seminar, sponsorship, and direct outreach. While the plan acknowledges that some tools and techniques are tailored to specific audiences it does not clearly explain which tool/technique corresponds with which audience and which goal. Several evaluation approaches are identified, including tracking numbers of program applicants, use of tools, diversity of partners, effective communications with decision-makers, program availability and funding, ratio of positive to negative press, and response to a socio-economic longitudinal survey. Metrics are not provided, nor are the mechanisms for many of the evaluation approaches. While most of the communications tools listed in the plan were created, the evaluation components of the plan were not implemented.

Strengths

- Thorough communications with the Management Board, Technical Committee, and Working Groups (i.e., Andy's emails, frequent meetings, Informational seminar)
- Extensive content written about projects and accomplishments
- Extensive content written for grazers, land owners, land managers
- Attractive website utilizing up to date content management system
- Key documents and communications tools archived and readily available on website
- Employ an array of communications tools
- Utilize tools appropriate for landowners (e.g., newspaper articles, radio spots)
- Conducted landowner focus groups to better understand audience
- Active Communications Workgroup
- Clear biological priorities by geographic area, that can guide communications

Weaknesses

- Communications plan needs to connect audiences with appropriate messages and tools
- Unclear how communications tie to organizational goals and Implementation Plan objectives
- Management Board and partners have had limited involvement in communications planning or communications delivery
- Need to work more with non-traditional agriculture partners who reach landowners beyond “the choir”
- Limited delivery of written material beyond site visits and web links
- Limited tracking/evaluation of communications delivery and outcomes
- Website menu could be fleshed out and less reliant on pdfs
- Lacking an e-newsletter using Mail Chimp or similar program
- Need to consider appropriateness of social media (e.g., Facebook) & YouTube
- Limited audience assessment
- Rudimentary graphic design on factsheets

Communications Needs

The 2014 Annual Operations Plan calls for:

Contract with outside expertise to obtain a communication assessment to facilitate the process of developing a communication plan

- Define communication audiences, key messages, and develop outreach tools utilizing human dimensions information
- Develop a communication plan that effectively meets the goals and objectives of the RWBJV Implementation Plan
- Prepare recommendations for Technical Committee and Management Board to inform of needs (capacity, funds) that will be necessary to implement communication plan
- Perform a membership assessment to ensure committee capacity will meet communication plan goals

The JV contracted with Ashley Dayer to work with the Working Group to accomplish the first four steps. Compared to past Communications Planning efforts, the RWBJV plan should focus more heavily on private lands.

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Appendix C. Assessment of Needs for Defining 5-Year Goals

Nominal Group: Opportunities for RWBJV Communications

To initiate communications planning, a 3-day Communications Needs Assessment Workshop with the Management Board and the various workgroups was held in November 2014. Day 1 involved the Management Board; Day 2 the Private Lands Workgroup (morning) and the Conservation Planning Workgroup (afternoon); and Day 3 the Acquisition and Public Lands Workgroups (morning). The Communications Workgroup participated in all of these phases of the workshop.

The workshop provided participants the opportunity to learn more about the approach to the Strategic Communications Plan and to provide feedback. The Management Board and Communications Workgroup identified opportunities for RWBJV communications through a nominal group process. Participants in the workgroups discussed these opportunities further.

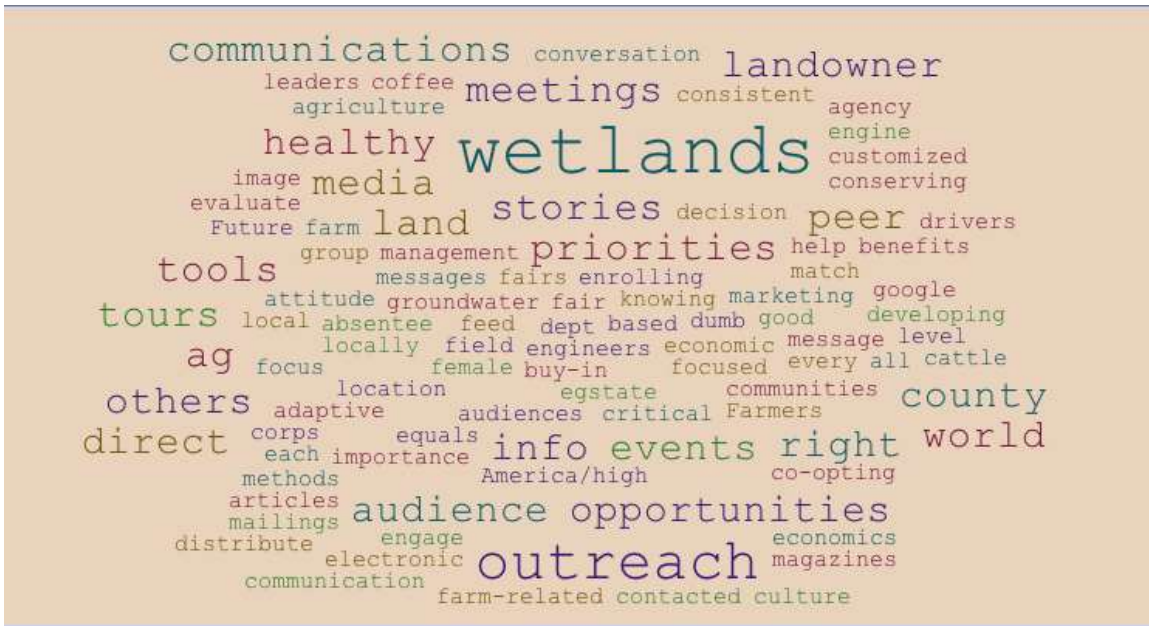
The nominal process focused on the question of “What are the opportunities for communications for the RWBJV?” The opportunities were then ranked by the participants on an individual basis.

Fifty-two opportunities for RWBJV communications were identified by the Management Board and Communications Workgroup.

Most highly ranked opportunities (written as described by participants) included:

- knowing who the RWBJV is
- providing real world success stories
- economic opportunities for enrolling in programs
- the right social media
- reaching leaders in “ag culture”
- right tools for every conversation
- targeting communication priorities to match conservation priorities
- be on Google search engine
- critical importance of RWB for migration
- developing an attitude of stewardship
- image, value, & economics (videos)
- direct benefits of wetland conservation to landowners

Following the meeting, Ashley Dayer analyzed the opportunities statements, using a Word Cloud program (which shows frequency of words used, with those mentioned more in a larger font).



The WordCloud and list of items was also used as a starting point for conversations about the RWBJV's communications needs with each of the Workgroups. The feedback from this nominal group was used to inform the subsequent sections of the Communications Plan.

Participants in each phase of the workshop also reviewed the Discovery Phase results and offered additional perspectives on the strengths and weaknesses of past RWBJV communications efforts. The Management Board affirmed that the Strategic Communications Plan should help address all of the goals in the Implementation Plan. The Workgroups identified audiences who will be necessary to communicate with, in line with each of these goals.

Appendix D. Audience Assessments

Following the Needs Assessment workshop, Audience Assessments were conducted for audiences identified as key to the accomplishment of the priority goals. Priority external audiences (see below) were interviewed. The Management Board, Technical Committee, and Workgroup members provided feedback via Survey Monkey. To learn more about the audience of Nebraska citizens, hunters, and viewers, we reviewed a survey conducted by the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission.

Interviews

The audiences for the interviews included: agricultural producers (resident landowners, young farmers, small/organic farmers, farm operators, and elected officials in agricultural communities); agricultural services industry professionals (crop consultant and agronomists, agricultural services industry salespeople, and lenders in agricultural communities); visitor services professionals (tourism and visitor association staff); and resource professionals (private lands biologists, Natural Resource Conservation Service staff, Nebraska Game and Parks Commission leaders, US Fish and Wildlife Services National Wildlife Refuge staff, wildlife NGO staff; and foundations). The Working Group selected representatives to be interviewed based upon their high level of knowledge and experience with an audience, their familiarity with the RWBJV, and their likelihood to speak honestly to assist in the development of the Communications Plan.

The interviews were conducted via phone with Dayer. Each interviewee was asked 15 questions (Table 7). The questions were designed to better understand the audience and their attitudes, motivations, barriers, and communications needs.

Table 7. Audience Assessment interview questions

What is your role with [insert organization or group]? RWBJV?
What is important to [insert]?
What are their attitudes towards conservation? Birds? RWBJV?
Where/how do the interests of [insert] and RWBJV overlap? diverge?
Why would [insert] partner with RWBJV on conservation?
What would be barriers?
Where does [insert] get their conservation information?
How has the RWBJV reached out to [insert] before? Was it/is it successful? Why/why not?
How would it be best for the RWBJV to share information and communicate with [insert] in the future?
Anything else I should note?

For each interview question, we pulled out common themes in the responses. We presented these results in a presentation to the Communications Workgroup and the Management Board, and they provided further insights about how to interpret the findings. A full presentation of results is available from the RWBJV. In summary, the key lessons that were learned in the interviews included:

- 1) Resource professionals are “the choir”, or people who are already convinced about the value of the RWBJV. They are also most similar to the RWBJV in terms of what is important to them and their attitudes and interest. There are limited barriers to their collaboration with the RWBJV. Communications with this group are going well, and the RWBJV should continue mostly as it has. Some of the interviews indicated that it might be worthwhile to add more national-level and leadership-level outreach, including an e-newsletter like other Joint Ventures produce to show their success stories.
- 2) There is a great deal of potential for continuing to build on the RWBJV’s past communications with landowners and producers. To be successful will continue to require a strategic approach. The RWBJV will need to reach the “right people” (e.g., landowners interested in hunting or sustainable agriculture), at the “right time” (e.g., when prices are down, when a landowner is retiring), with the “right message” (e.g., tied to their motivations, which are likely at least partially financially driven), and in the “right place” (i.e., focused on the RWBJV’s priority areas). Communications will continue to require one-on-one approaches with relationship building over the long-term. The RWBJV could better use existing agricultural meetings (e.g., extension or a meeting about a new product) to reach landowners. Also, better connecting tours to demonstration sites with local media can secure more positive press, which is important in agricultural communities. Communications should focus on building trust, recognizing the conservation contribution of producers and landowners, articulating what the JV offers, and ensuring that any program restrictions work for producers. To be most successful, multiple organizations and agencies should provide shared messaging about all of the possible programs.
- 3) Similar to the above, the agricultural services industry is likely to be responsive to RWBJV communications, if they focus on the right people, including those who have a hunting or wildlife interest and recognize the business benefit of partnering with a conservation organization. Given that the RWBJV has not been working with this audience much in the past, it may be worthwhile to focus on a certain geographic area or business sector. Working with opinion leaders in the business community could be most effective.
- 4) The Visitors Services industry was interviewed as an audience, but ultimately determined to be an appropriate communications channel in areas where they are communicating about birds. The RWBJV should consider providing them with website content and providing them with videos, tour information, or brochures that could reach wildlife viewers.

Partner Feedback

The request for feedback on communications was sent to the Management Board, Technical Committee, and Workgroup members. Thirty-nine of the 70 individuals (56%) on this list responded. We learned that the majority of the partners consider all of the existing communications tools (one-on-one with staff, meetings, annual information seminar, email, “Updates from the Coordinator”, and tours of demonstration sites) important for staying connected with and receiving information from the RWBJV, except the website. The partners offered suggestions for how to improve the website including less text and more photos, more emphasis on accomplishments, summary of current research and publications, partner contact information, a password-protected section with information for the partners, a calendar of events, and more information for landowners.

In expanding communications for the future, the communications tools most of interest to the partners are an e-newsletter and a year-end report, and, to a lesser extent, participation in other groups' meetings. Topics most of interest for communications were habitat conservation, partner success, regional conservation news, science, and grants.

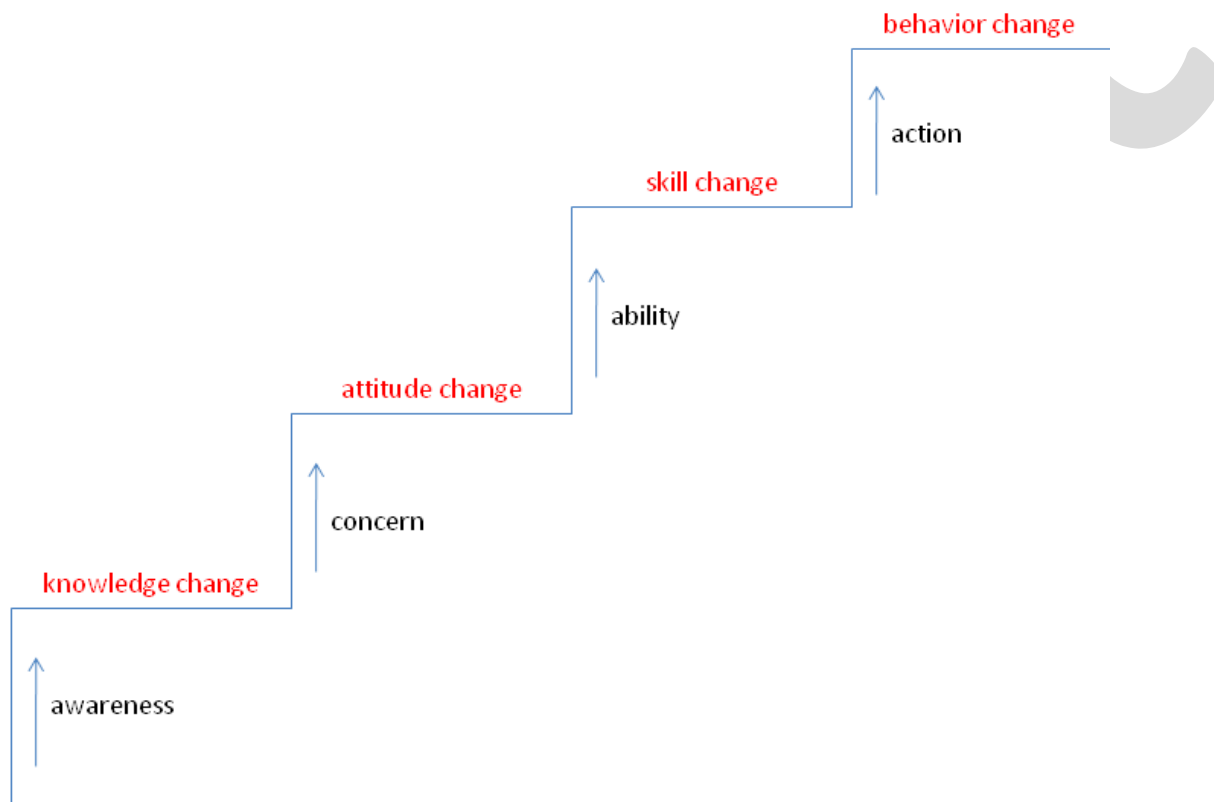
Statewide Survey

The insights we gained from the Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan survey included the household participation rates in recreation: 59% fishing; 41% hunting, shooting, or trapping; 37% observing or photographing wildlife or nature. The most common motivation for outdoor recreation was enjoying nature/getting outside/getting away, followed by having fun. The most preferred sources of information were direct mail (30%), email (26%), and the website (19%). Overall, the satisfaction with the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission was very high (over 80%) related to managing wildlife resources, conserving biodiversity, and outdoor opportunities, suggesting that this agency may be the key communications channel for reaching recreationist and citizen audiences related to bird conservation topics.

Appendix E. Communications Objectives

A communications objective takes the broad RWBJV goals selected for communications and relates them to specific audiences. Ultimately, the main communications objectives are intended to influence behavior in that an audience behaving in a certain way will allow for the accomplishment of the goal. However, it may not be possible to change an audience's behavior before first addressing their knowledge, attitudes, and skills. Education and communications are often thought of as following a staircase of phases as shown in Figure 2, below. First, awareness must be raised (knowledge change), then concern increased (attitude change), then appropriate abilities developed (skill change), for ultimately action (behavior change).

Figure 2. Education and communications – a stair-step process leading to behavior change.



Making objectives measurable. All of these objectives can be measured by providing specific percentages to target for each of the knowledge, attitudes, skills, or behaviors (currently they are listed generically as “increase the percentage of...”). These objectives serve as the foundation for an evaluation following the implementation of the communications campaign to determine whether the objectives have been reached. Audience assessments through surveys or interviews should be conducted to determine the current percentage of the audience group with the given knowledge, attitudes, skills, or behaviors. Then, the appropriate measurable objectives for a communications campaign could be determined. The knowledge, attitudes, skills, and behavioral objectives for groups of audiences for each goal are listed below.

Objectives for messaging. When considering which objectives to focus on for messages, the RWBJV should consider where the audience member is on the stairsteps for communications (Figure 2). Should the emphasis be on improving knowledge? Or is the audience already knowledgeable and aware? If so, should the emphasis be on attitudes? Or are they already concerned? If so, should the emphasis be on skills or actions? Communications should consider their level of technical knowledge and how complex to be with the message. Are the audience members primarily scientists, managers, or not members of the conservation community at all? See Table 8 for the objectives by audience segments for each of the goals for RWBJV communications efforts.

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Table 8. Objectives by audience segments for each of the goals for RWBJV communications efforts.

Influential Audiences	Knowledge Objectives: Ensure that XX% of audience knows that...	Attitudes Objectives: Ensure that XX% of audience believe that...	Skills Objectives: Ensure that XX% of audience is able to...	Behavioral Objectives: Ensure that XX% of audience ...
Goal 1. Increase community support & understanding of the RWBJV mission				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Citizens -Hunters -Viewers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -the mission of the RWBJV is to support cooperative, mutually beneficial partnerships that advance our partners' common goals while improving the habitats upon which so many birds depend. -the RWBJV and partners work together to conserve migratory birds and their habitats which also benefits people. -the JV partnership focuses its work in the Rainwater Basin and Central Platte region, among other landscapes. -the RWB is the focal point of spring migration for waterfowl in the Central Flyway and is of hemispherical importance for shorebirds. -the RWB region includes a matrix of wetlands under both private and public ownership. -playa wetlands provide cleaner drinking water, ground water recharge to the Ogallala Aquifer; thereby contributing to a sustainable supply of water for area residents and agriculture producers. -the RWB is important to the waterfowl, waterbirds, shorebirds, and other migratory birds as well as 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -the RWB is a special place for people and wildlife. -wetlands are important to people. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -identify where the RWB region is. -recognize what a wetland is. -take action to support habitat conservation. -offer "informed consent" of conservation programs and policies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1.1. Supports implementation of conservation programs and policies. 1.2 Offers non-financial support for (wetlands & uplands) habitat conservation.

Influential Audiences	Knowledge Objectives: Ensure that XX% of audience knows that...	Attitudes Objectives: Ensure that XX% of audience believe that...	Skills Objectives: Ensure that XX% of audience is able to...	Behavioral Objectives: Ensure that XX% of audience ...
	<p>resident wildlife.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -the Central Platte River Valley provides some of the best Sandhill Crane viewing opportunities in the world. Nearly the entire world's population of Sandhill Cranes passes through the area. -the RWB provides one of the best waterfowl migration spectacles in the world. -public lands in the RWB provide significant recreational opportunities for hunting waterfowl and other wildlife, as well as world-class wildlife viewing opportunities. 			
<p>-Policy-makers (Congress, OMB, DOI, FWS, USDA, FSA, NRCS, State Legislators, and County Commissioners)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -JVs are one of the most efficient programs when it comes to results relative to funding. Over their 25 year history these public-private partnerships leveraged every Congressionally appropriated fund 35:1, helping to conserve 18.5 million acres of habitat. -the RWBJV is known for its close work with private landowners producing on-the-ground conservation outcomes. -federal appropriations and Nebraska Environmental Trust funds are some of the primary funding sources for the JV. -the RWBJV uses Nebraska Environmental Trust funds to 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Joint Venture funding, provided by the U.S, Fish and Wildlife Service, and leveraged partner contributions are efficiently used for bird conservation and the many other species that depend on wetland and grassland habitat. -many members of the public enjoy hunting and watching migratory birds and resident wildlife that use these wetlands. -area residents and tourists that visit Nebraska appreciate viewing and 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -contact the JV staff or partners to learn more about how conservation funding benefits their states. -justify their support of these conservation policies and programs to their constituents. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1.3 Promotes and advocate for (wetland and upland) habitat conservation, programs, funding, and policies. 1.4 Is neutral or non-confrontational with regards to programs and policies.

Influential Audiences	Knowledge Objectives: Ensure that XX% of audience knows that...	Attitudes Objectives: Ensure that XX% of audience believe that...	Skills Objectives: Ensure that XX% of audience is able to...	Behavioral Objectives: Ensure that XX% of audience ...
	<p>conserve habitat on public and private lands.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -the United States Department of Agriculture Natural Resource Conservation Service programs including the Agriculture Conservation Easement Programs, the Environmental Quality Incentives Program, and the Farm Service Agency's Conservation Reserve Program are important conservation programs. -U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Partners for Fish and Wildlife and Nebraska Game and Parks Commission's staff and funding is integral to on-the-ground delivery. -these funds and programs primarily go to support conservation on private lands. -playa wetlands and associated grassland buffers provide for ecosystem services (e.g., groundwater recharge, nutrient cycling, and clean drinking water). 	<p>recreational opportunities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -targeted delivery of conservation funding is a win-win for the people and the wildlife of the region. -conservation funds play a vital role in protecting ecosystem services (i.e. groundwater recharge, nutrient cycling, floodwater storage and retention, etc.) that people rely on. 		

Influential Audiences	Knowledge Objectives: Ensure that XX% of audience knows that...	Attitudes Objectives: Ensure that XX% of audience believe that...	Skills Objectives: Ensure that XX% of audience is able to...	Behavioral Objectives: Ensure that XX% of audience ...
Goal 2. Strengthen and broaden the partnership				
Management Board -Workgroup members -Tech Committee	<p>-the mission of the RWBJV is to support cooperative, mutually beneficial partnerships that advance our partners' common goals while improving the habitats upon which so many birds depend.</p> <p>-the RWBJV was formed in 1992 to serve as a partnership for habitat conservation.</p> <p>-JVs formed because partners realized they can achieve more conservation together rather than acting alone.</p> <p>-JV staff capacity and fiscal resources are designed to support the JV partnership in science-based habitat conservation.</p> <p>-the Workgroups identify bottlenecks to habitat conservation relevant to their area of expertise and potential strategies to address limiting factors.</p> <p>-the Technical Committee evaluates Workgroup recommendations for technical rigor and resource needs and makes recommendations to the Board.</p> <p>-the science and habitat priorities for the RWBJV are outlined in the Implementation Plan.</p> <p>-the RWBJV is responsible for landbird, shorebird, waterbird, and waterfowl conservation in BCR 11 and 19 in Nebraska.</p>	<p>-the JV is a partnership that benefits bird conservation in the RWBJV Administrative Area.</p> <p>-participation in the JV links you to conservation professionals and resources.</p> <p>-being part of the collective effort offers a better chance of conservation victories than working alone.</p> <p>-JV staff are available for you to turn to for support.</p> <p>- participation in the JV provides an important partnership opportunity for organizations.</p> <p>-the RWBJV embraces the delivery of conservation, through planning and innovative funding mechanisms.</p> <p>-the RWBJV is committed to conservation on private lands.</p> <p>-the RWBJV uses resources effectively to ensure conservation outcomes.</p>	<p>-explain what the RWBJV is.</p> <p>-speak to shared JV goals and activities.</p> <p>-identify ways they could partner in their own endeavors to work toward shared JV goals.</p> <p>-regularly lend their time, funding, and expertise to support JV activities and initiatives that lead to achieving Implementation Plan goals and objectives.</p> <p>-turn to JV staff and request tools that can aid in representing the JV.</p> <p>-direct interested and potential members to the JV.</p> <p>-identify opportunities that are outside of the box but important to conservation solutions.</p> <p>-identify opportunities to leverage funds to support conservation in the RWB.</p>	<p>2.1 Actively participates in Management Board, Tech Committee, and Workgroups.</p> <p>2.2 Contributes to the science and habitat priorities of the partnership.</p> <p>2.3 Communicates to those in your organization about the JV.</p> <p>2.4 Advocates for human capital and financial resources for the JV (nationally, regionally, locally).</p>

Influential Audiences	Knowledge Objectives: Ensure that XX% of audience knows that...	Attitudes Objectives: Ensure that XX% of audience believe that...	Skills Objectives: Ensure that XX% of audience is able to...	Behavioral Objectives: Ensure that XX% of audience ...
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -the RWBJV invests over 95% of its resources toward on-the-ground conservation delivery. -this JV works closely with landowners and considers their involvement critical. -the RWBJV can provide both administrative and financial support to help accomplish shared conservation objectives. -the RWBJV partnership develops relationships and supports conservation throughout the administrative area. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -the RWBJV embraces and seeks to engage new and non-traditional partners. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Agricultural services -Industry foundations -Sand County Foundation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -the RWB is the focal point of spring migration for waterfowl in the Central Flyway. An estimated 8.6 million waterfowl rely on this region. -RWB wetlands are a type of playa wetland. -playa wetlands provide ecosystem services, including filtering sediment, agricultural nutrients and chemicals from run-off. -playa wetlands offer significant ground-water recharge for Ogallala Aquifer. -there is program flexibility that allows playa wetlands to be integrated into farm operations as grazing lands and for forage production, and even at times for crop production. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> [repeat selections from above, once edited] -our flexible approach to conservation complements working lands. -you can “make a difference” by engaging with the Joint Venture. -this Joint Venture interacts with private landowners to accomplish conservation. -the JV has extensive experience in grant management and writing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> [repeat selections from above, once edited] -understand the economics of conservation and the benefits that it provides to farmers. -talk with landowners and others in ag services industry about the JV. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2.5 Engages with the partnership.

Influential Audiences	Knowledge Objectives: Ensure that XX% of audience knows that...	Attitudes Objectives: Ensure that XX% of audience believe that...	Skills Objectives: Ensure that XX% of audience is able to...	Behavioral Objectives: Ensure that XX% of audience ...
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -playas provide mutual benefits for the agricultural sector and birds. -conservation actions benefit soil conservation and soil health. -transition of flood-prone cropland to grazing lands and/or forage production can increase net farm income. -the RWBJV partnership provides technical and financial assistance to landowners, and if an existing program does not meet their needs, we can design new programs to do so. 			

Influential Audiences	Knowledge Objectives: Ensure that XX% of audience knows that...	Attitudes Objectives: Ensure that XX% of audience believe that...	Skills Objectives: Ensure that XX% of audience is able to...	Behavioral Objectives: Ensure that XX% of audience ...
Goal 3. Conserve, restore, and enhance wetlands & grasslands on public lands				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Public lands managers -USFWS -NGPC 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -habitat managed on public lands contributes to the habitat objectives in the RWBJV's Implementation Plan, as well as continental needs for bird populations. -vegetation management can promote habitat that provides important forage for waterfowl during migration and habitat for shorebirds. -vegetation management can provide important habitat for different types of birds. There are trade-offs to consider. -the RWBJV partnership develops relationships and supports conservation throughout the administrative area. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -public lands can be important demonstration areas. -working with local producers is essential. -it's important to embrace opportunities to work with adjacent landowners. -communicating with local governments and the general public about management actions and desired outcomes ensure the success of projects. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -communicate the effective management options for quality habitat. -communicate well with producers, local government and the public. -develop and implement robust management plans for habitat conservation on public lands. -contact and ensure local producers know about wetland conservation opportunities. -encourage compatible use on neighboring long-term protected private land. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3.1 Improves management of wetlands & grasslands. 3.2 Provides forage for birds during migration 3.3 Communicates with appropriate audiences (e.g., local government, communities, general public) with regards to management actions and desired outcomes.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Public lands managers -USFWS -NGPC 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -the RWBJV partners have identified areas where acquisition of private lands from willing landowners will maximize habitat conservation. -there are potential funding sources for positively influencing lands under public ownership for priority birds. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -working with willing landowners is essential. -adding public lands in key areas is important because of the opportunities to maximize management options on existing public lands. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -reach out to willing landowners. -connect willing landowners with the JV office to ensure opportunities are not lost. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3.4 Adds targeted, selective lands (from willing sellers) to the public lands base.

Influential Audiences	Knowledge Objectives: Ensure that XX% of audience knows that...	Attitudes Objectives: Ensure that XX% of audience believe that...	Skills Objectives: Ensure that XX% of audience is able to...	Behavioral Objectives: Ensure that XX% of audience ...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Public lands managers -USFWS -NGPC 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -satisfying recreational experiences are connected with retention of recreationists, which leads to a greater number of conservation supporters (financially and otherwise). -human dimensions research is underway to better understand the components of wetland recreation experiences that are most important to hunters and non-hunters. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -the findings of the human dimensions research on hunters and viewers will be important to apply in the RWB area. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -manage lands for hunting, wildlife viewing, and other recreational pursuits. -market lands for hunting, viewing, and other recreational pursuits. 	<p>3.5 Provides satisfactory recreational opportunities.</p>

Influential Audiences	Knowledge Objectives: Ensure that XX% of audience knows that...	Attitudes Objectives: Ensure that XX% of audience believe that...	Skills Objectives: Ensure that XX% of audience is able to...	Behavioral Objectives: Ensure that XX% of audience ...
Goal 4. Conserve, restore, and enhance wetlands & grasslands on private lands				
<p>-Landowners -Producers</p>	<p>- 99% of the RWB is privately owned. -conservation programs are varied from short-term conservation agreements for management and establishment of grazing infrastructure to fee title sales to public entities. A program exists for every landowner. -conservation programs are voluntary. -conservation programs provide funding and cover labor, equipment. Options exist from grazing infrastructure to pivot modifications. -the RWBJV works hard to make sure programs are win-win for landowners and conservation (e.g., center pivot crossing reserved right, to pivot modification, to reserved grazing rights). -the RWBJV is a partnership of organizations and landowners. Industry and ag services are our partners as well. -the RWBJV seeks to find economically viable, socially acceptable conservation programs. (e.g., reserved grazing rights) -wetlands provide groundwater recharge, nutrient cycling, flood protection. -the RWBJV works outside of the</p>	<p>-conservation programs can provide more wildlife on their land. -conservation programs can benefit their operation aesthetically and economically. -conservation can enhance wildlife habitat and hunting opportunities on their land. -conservation is important to future generations. -the RWBJV works with landowners to ensure that conservation programs are feasible on their land. -the RWBJV partners try to understand the needs of producers and find “win-win” solutions that both provide habitat and increase net farm income. -the RWBJV staff is trustworthy and work well with producers in my area. -the RWBJV staff is responsive and try to minimize the burden of paperwork. -wetlands are a valuable component of agricultural</p>	<p>-use different conservation practices and know how to implement conservation activities. -contact the RWBJV office or appropriate RWBJV partners for resources about conservation activities and programs. -enroll in conservation programs. -recognize opportunities to maximize net farm income by transitioning flood prone cropland to forage production or grazing lands.</p>	<p>4.1 Participates in conservation activities (e.g., restore wetlands, manage invasive species, grassland and riparian habitat enhancement). 4.2 Incorporates grazing to diversify their operation. 4.3 Incorporates wetlands into their operations. 4.4 Enrolling in conservation programs (e.g., landowner agreements, easement programs, acquisition programs,). 4.5 Is neutral or non-confrontational with regards to programs and policies.</p>

Influential Audiences	Knowledge Objectives: Ensure that XX% of audience knows that...	Attitudes Objectives: Ensure that XX% of audience believe that...	Skills Objectives: Ensure that XX% of audience is able to...	Behavioral Objectives: Ensure that XX% of audience ...
	<p>traditional programs.</p> <p>-the RWBJV conservation activities benefit many species, including waterfowl and pheasants.</p>	<p>operations.</p>		
<p>-Private lands biologists</p> <p>-NRCS</p> <p>-Agricultural services industry</p> <p>-Bankers</p>	<p>- 99% of the RWB is privately owned.</p> <p>-since 1992 the RWBJV has completed over 500 conservation projects on private lands, benefiting nearly 20,000 acres.</p> <p>-the RWBJV partners seek to find “win-win” solutions. The RWBJV partners are not averse to thinking outside the box to make wetland and upland grassland conservation economically viable, while providing desired habitat conditions.</p> <p>-with 16,000 farm operators and 32,000 individuals with an ownership nexus of historic wetlands in the RWB, it’s not possible for the JV staff to reach all landowners who may be interested in conservation. Therefore we need to be strategic in marketing, outreach, and delivery.</p> <p>-the RWBJV partnership develops relationships and supports conservation throughout the administrative area.</p>	<p>-conservation of species and habitats depends greatly on working with private landowners to conserve private lands.</p> <p>-working together to reach out to landowners is more likely to be effective.</p> <p>-taking the time to build relationships with landowners is a worthwhile investment.</p> <p>-programs that are economically viable can still provide habitat for priority species</p> <p>-it is important to recognize the role private landowner stewardship plays in conservation.</p>	<p>-articulate the importance of private lands conservation for birds and other wildlife in the RWB.</p> <p>-evaluate existing private land conservation programs, consider where changes may better meet the needs of private landowners, and encourage enrollment.</p> <p>-identify landowners or groups that may have interest in participating in particular conservation programs.</p> <p>-listen to landowners when describing their goals and objectives</p> <p>-describe conservation programs available to landowners.</p> <p>-articulate ecosystem services beyond birds.</p> <p>-articulate agricultural economics of conservation.</p> <p>-understand farm practices.</p>	<p>4.6 Directs producers to the most appropriate set of programs available to meet both habitat and farm operation objectives.</p> <p>4.7 Encourages landowners to participate in conservation activities & enroll in conservation programs.</p> <p>4.8 Assists producers with a streamlined enrollment process.</p> <p>4.9 Develops and delivers tools to benefit wetland and grassland restoration and demonstrate economic viability.</p>

Influential Audiences	Knowledge Objectives: Ensure that XX% of audience knows that...	Attitudes Objectives: Ensure that XX% of audience believe that...	Skills Objectives: Ensure that XX% of audience is able to...	Behavioral Objectives: Ensure that XX% of audience ...
-Landowners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -private landowners participate <u>voluntarily</u> in conservation programs. -private lands enrolled in conservation programs will not lead to any requirements or additional regulations for neighboring lands. -lands enrolled in conservation programs provide benefits beyond their boundaries, such as increased wildlife populations for recreational opportunities, flood control, and improved water quality and quantity. -playa wetlands are a major recharge point to the Ogallala Aquifer and are important to groundwater supply. -conservation easements are a flexible tool that can be applied in many ways and can aid landowners in ensuring the future viability of their operation and the legacy of the property. -when land is put under conservation easement, funds are typically provided to the landowner. The landowner is making the decision to enroll lands in the program because it makes sense to him/her and their operation. -wetlands and grasslands can be grazed and may provide a more economically viable option than cultivation of flood-prone cropland. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -private landowners interested in conservation should be able to participate in such programs and activities. -if private landowners near me enroll in conservation programs, it won't negatively impact my land or community and may, in fact, be positive. -individual landowners get to make decisions with regards to the land they own and operate. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -be supportive of neighbors interested in enrolling in conservation programs. -explain and/or factually discuss conservation programs with neighbors. 	4.10 Accepts wetlands and conservation programs on private lands in their communities.

Appendix F. Desired Characteristics of a JV Matrix for Communications, Education, and Outreach.

Joint Ventures’ competencies are outlined in the “Desired Characteristics Matrix.” A section of that matrix defines the “minimal content” expected of a Joint Venture in their communications, education, and outreach activities, as well as the “comprehensive content” of a highly functioning Joint Venture. During the Discovery Phase of communications planning, we assessed the status of the RWBJV communications, education, and outreach efforts (as shown below). The communications plan has been designed to aid the RWBJV increasing the areas where it is achieving “comprehensive content.”

Table 9. RWBJV’s Status on the Desired Characteristics of a JV Matrix for Communications, Education, and Outreach.

Sub-Element or Product	Minimal Content	Comprehensive Content	Status as of October 2014	Activities and Progress in Past 3 Years
Coordination/Partnerships	-Appropriate joint venture partners or staff represents the Joint Venture mission to the local, regional, national, and international conservation community.	-The JV has identified optimal roles for the Management Board, JV office, and the JV partners in furthering its biological objectives through communications, education, and outreach activities and products. As deemed appropriate, the JV has identified gaps in capabilities and fortified those gaps to raise awareness, change attitudes, and change behaviors to support bird habitat conservation.	Minimal underway	<p>Staff plays primary role in communicating about JV mission.</p> <p>Have worked to ensure partners know roles and on appropriate working groups etc.</p> <p>But partners have not been involved in communications planning or delivery; gaps not identified.</p>

Priority Audiences and Objectives	<p>-Joint venture partners have evaluated the efficacy and applicability of communications, education and outreach activities in achieving Joint Venture conservation objectives.</p> <p>-Joint Venture Management Board has identified priority internal and external audiences and key messages.</p>	<p>-A JV Communications Plan, guided by information from biological planning, conservation design, habitat delivery, monitoring and research, is developed to set communication, education, and outreach objectives and target activities and products geographically, programmatically and to the highest priority conservation needs.</p> <p>-The JV has identified and prioritized all relevant audiences and correlates audience objectives with bird habitat conservation goals and objectives to determine how much and where increases in audience awareness and what changes in attitudes/behaviors are necessary to reach bird conservation objectives.</p> <p>-The JV has established appropriate means of engaging priority audiences.</p>	Minimal underway.	<p>2011 Plan identified audiences & messages but Management Board not involved.</p> <p>2011 Plan also listed communications tools but unclear how they were evaluated/selected.</p> <p>Communications planning not currently linked to other activities of JV or objectives; communications efforts not specific by audience.</p>
Tactics and Products	<p>-Mechanisms exist to facilitate communication between Management Board, joint venture office, and the joint venture partners.</p> <p>-The Joint Venture maintains an up-to-date website.</p>	<p>-Each tactic and/or product (Examples include, but are not limited to: partner newsletters, public website, news releases, project tours, meetings, presentations and workshops) is evaluated to assess effectiveness and guide development of future communications products and activities.</p>	Minimal accomplished.	<p>JV Coordinator sends out updates quarterly. Meetings of MB and working groups well-attended.</p> <p>JV recently updated website.</p> <p>No evaluation of tools.</p>
Audience Assessment	<p>-Joint venture partners conduct informal assessment of priority audiences to determine their baseline level of awareness, attitudes, and behaviors affecting bird conservation in the Joint Venture region.</p>	<p>-JV conducts regular, formal assessments of priority audiences to measure change in awareness, attitudes and behaviors over time. Assessments may be in the form of focus groups, surveys, interviews or other systematic means of gathering audience data.</p> <p>-The results are used to improve future JV activities in support of bird conservation objectives.</p>	Minimal accomplished for landowners.	<p>Focus groups of landowners recently completed by DJ Case & Associates.</p>

Appendix G. Resources

Bird Education Alliance for Conservation. www.birdedalliance.org

Bogart, R.E., Duberstein, J.N., & Slobe, D.F. (2009). Strategic communications and its critical role in bird habitat conservation: Understanding the social ecological landscape. In Rich, T.D., C. Arizmendi, D. Demarest and C. Thompson [eds.]. *Tundra to Tropics: Connecting Birds, Habitats and People. Proceedings of the 4th International Partners in Flight Conference, 13-16 February 2008*. McAllen, TX. University of Texas-Pan American Press. Edinburg, TX. [online: http://www.pwrc.usgs.gov/pif/pubs/McAllenProc/articles/PIFo9_Education_Communication/Bogart_PIFo9.pdf]

Jacobson, S.K. (1999). Communications skills for conservation professionals. Washington, D.C.: Island Press.