

## **Why Work Together? Public Relations and Branding**

*In this section you will learn how to:*

- Create a citizen awareness campaign
- Plan a field day, complete with tips for:
  - Preparing an event
  - Promoting an event
  - What makes a good program presentation

**A**s illustrated in *Water Quality Matters to Us All*, people living within an impaired watershed often meet the topic of water quality improvement with ambivalence, resistance and confusion. Change is difficult and an on-going process. It is important to establish ongoing contact with all citizens of the watershed. This will improve their overall understanding of the water quality challenges in the area and increase their willingness to become involved in more specific ways. A quarterly newsletter alone is not sufficient to sustain a long-term watershed improvement project.

Key elements in any campaign—political, advertising, or watershed improvement—include building awareness and support. Informing stakeholders of goals, asking for their input and, ultimately, changing behavior, takes time, consistency and repetition. In order to be successful, your campaign must provide a citizen benefit and make it clear how specific problems can be solved. The messages must be tied directly to that benefit or solution. Be clear, simple, and make sure the message isn't lost in the campaign.

## Resources for a successful watershed improvement project

The awareness campaign does not replace the smaller group work that is necessary for a successful watershed project. Part of the implementation plan will be to work with specific groups such as farmers or landowners who will be needed to make land management changes to help improve water quality.

There are several good resources to help in this work. An excellent resource is your local Basin Coordinator. You can find his or her contact information on the Basin Coordinator page on the IDNR website: [www.iowadnr.gov/Environment/WaterQuality/WatershedImprovement/ContactWatershedStaff.aspx](http://www.iowadnr.gov/Environment/WaterQuality/WatershedImprovement/ContactWatershedStaff.aspx)

### Other good resources:

- Iowa State University's Leadership & Performance-based Watershed Management website:  
[www.soc.iastate.edu/extension/watershed/performance.html](http://www.soc.iastate.edu/extension/watershed/performance.html)
- North Carolina State University's "Local Watershed Planning: Getting Citizens Involved":  
<http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/depts/agecon/WECO/publication/LWPguidebook.pdf>

These tools should be adapted toward your specific watershed-based community needs.



The awareness campaign must be based on the information you discerned about your citizenry in your community assessment. While many groups might adopt the idea of setting up a booth at the local farmers market or having Boy Scouts put flyers on cars during church services, the message and execution of these activities should be unique to your area.

Marketing is a fun and creative way to get your watershed improvement project out and increase your citizen participation in both numbers and diversity of people. It does not have to be expensive and can range from putting up posters in a local grocery store or church to sponsoring local sporting events—with a lot of room for creativity!

All of your outreach and education should be packaged in enticing language and imagery that will engage people in the importance of the work. Use language—consumer language, not just water quality-related language—and imagery in your marketing and outreach materials that best encompasses the issues, the work and attracts your local citizens.

Citizen Awareness Campaign proposals for the watersheds of Badger Creek, Silver Creek, Yellow River Headwaters, Hickory Grove Lake and Black Hawk Lake were created specifically for their area and watershed amenities. After surveys, interviews and social mapping were completed, the campaigns were created to align with results from these tools. See these proposals on the Iowa Learning Farms website: [www.extension.iastate.edu/ilf/](http://www.extension.iastate.edu/ilf/). The proposals contain many ideas for promotion of the watershed improvement projects for the watershed group to implement based on their budget.

One of the suggestions included in each proposal

*A logo is a visual identifier of your project. Clean lines, simple shapes and limited colors in your logo help with readability and recognition.*





*The Badger Creek Lake Watershed chose to use the above logo to bring project recognition. The logo below was a design draft.*



is the creation of a watershed logo, as a consistent, repetitive visual to brand your project. If possible, consult with a professional graphic artist about creating a logo. While it is tempting to use the outline of the lake or river within your watershed, it is perhaps not the most interesting or appealing means of branding the watershed project. A good brand or logo should help locals make an emotional connection to the watershed and be easily recognizable.

An example of a unique awareness builder that arose from the survey and social mapping is in the Silver Creek watershed, in the city of Cresco, where bronze statues are strategically placed across town. In this case, it was recommended that tags be tied to each sculpture containing a rhyme about the watershed and notification of an upcoming event where they would learn more about their watershed. This promotion is unique to the area and came about after researchers visited the watershed to complete the social mapping. It's this type of creative thinking that can generate excitement and awareness of your watershed and its importance to the community.



## Guide to Planning Field Days

Field days are an important means of communicating with the landowners in your watershed and can be important steps in engaging farmers in the watershed to work together and make land management changes that can improve the overall water quality. Holding a successful field day takes time and experience.

Since 2006, Iowa Learning Farms (ILF) has hosted 60 field days across Iowa. Over the years, our attendance has increased and farmers report increasing conservation practices as a result of attending one or more of the events. ILF field days are evaluated at multiple levels in order to ensure that our messages fit the audience. This strong feedback loop takes evaluation material and uses it immediately to improve our outreach and education at the field days.

The following guide contains the lessons that ILF has learned over the years about holding successful (well-attended, informative) local field days. Please email us at [ilf@iastate.edu](mailto:ilf@iastate.edu) if you have any questions.



### Field Day Preparation

- **START EARLY!** The most successful field days are scheduled many weeks in advance.
- Create a checklist for all persons involved with field day organization and planning (see sample in Appendix 6).
- Contact the field day host, suggested speakers, and caterer 4-6 weeks prior to the anticipated field day to reserve the date on their calendars.
- Field day attendance tends to be highest for



mid-week events; if possible avoid scheduling early Monday and late Friday field days, which limit attendance.



- Coordinate efforts with a respected local Iowa State University Extension and Outreach, Soil and Water Conservation District commissioner or local federal agency (NRCS, FSA) representative, as they have existing credibility with decision-makers (farmers, landowners) and “influencers” (co-op agronomists and other farm input suppliers).
- Encourage local sponsors to assist with field day expenses (food, table service); however, field day sponsorship should not necessarily result in the local sponsor receiving time on the field day program (simply acknowledge and recognize the sponsor’s generous assistance).
- Plan the field day around a mealtime; providing a meal almost certainly will increase field day attendance.
- Research and secure local caterer; include livestock commodity groups such as the county Pork Producers or Cattlemen to handle a portion or all of the meal.
- Encourage use of five-gallon coolers for water and iced drinks, rather than providing bottled water. This saves on trash and the environment!
- Acquire tables and chairs from a local church or civic organization to serve a field day meal. If extended time is to be spent in the field, accommodate attendees with hay racks, chairs or other seating.
- Reserve one or two portable toilets for field day attendees’ use.

- Ensure availability of sufficient off-road parking spaces for attendees.
- Prepare portable “FIELD DAY” signs directing attendees to field day sites and parking.

## Event Promotion

- Create and distribute a succinct, informative press release (see sample press release in Appendix 6) to be sent to local newspapers and radio stations, regional agriculture-oriented media, and farm broadcasters.
- Create and distribute an eye-catching, uncluttered promotional flyer (see sample in Appendix 6) *with limited text* to be displayed at local gathering spots (agency offices, farmer co-op, coffee shops) and possibly mailed to individual farmers and landowners.
- Contact agricultural media, local chambers of commerce, county conservation boards and local media including newspapers and radio, asking that the field day be noted on website and broadcast calendars. Strive to know which website calendars are most widely-read.
- Consider creating field day postcard invitations that can be mailed by the field day host or by the field day sponsor to friends and neighbors of the field day host, or to a broader potential audience.
- Area farm broadcasters with daily programs are eager to promote field days and workshops to their listeners, and may be willing to offer an on-air interview for field day planners to promote their event.

### ***Big Creek Lake Watershed event***

The promotional materials in used in this document, located in Appendix 6, are from the Big Creek Lake celebration on June 2, 2012. The park is located in Polk County, north of Des Moines. Publicity included a press release, flyers, word-of-mouth and radio interviews.

As a result, approximately 120 people attended the inaugural event.

## Field Day Program Presentations



- Identify successful, respected farmers and landowners as field day hosts and spokespersons and empower them to share their insights and experiences with field day attendees.
- Emphasize local farmer presentations; limit the number of academic “expert” presenters and the number of self-promoting agribusiness speakers. The most successful field days often have the farmers taking the lead in sharing their experiences, with the “experts” there to answer any questions that the farmer might not be able to address.
- Identify and focus upon a clearly defined theme and objectives for the field day program.
- Keep the program “moving”—minimize the number of sidebar questions/answers between speakers and individual audience members.
- Appoint a field day “emcee” to start/end the event; the emcee will introduce speakers and acknowledge sponsors, caterers, etc. The emcee is in charge during the field day.
- Ensure that audience members are comfortable during the field day; provide folding chairs or other seating, shade, and plenty of drinks—especially on a hot, sunny day.
- Have at least one (or more) portable public address system options available, particularly for in-field presentations and discussions; assume that audience members cannot hear the speaker without amplification—outside sound, including highway traffic, audience “whispered” conversations, etc. can limit attendees’ ability to hear the featured speaker.



- Limit individual field day presentations to 15-20 minutes and the full field day program to no more than 75-90 minutes; shorter, focused presentations are most effective.
- Field day coordinators should consciously prevent presenters/presentations from exceeding the 15-20 minute limit and encourage one-on-one or small-group discussions following the formal presentation.
- Speakers should not to use posters during in-field presentations—often the visuals are not large enough for people to easily see and it distracts from the overall message. Also limit the number of paper materials (handouts). These are cumbersome on windy days and attendees feel awkward carrying them around.

Field days are about connecting people and exchanging information. Allowing for enough informal discussion time is really important for the overall success of any field day.

