

Recommendation 15: *Develop integrated mechanisms for using Web-based and other emerging technologies to store and share data, communicate within the System, and inspire and educate visitors and the public.*

Overview: It's a marketing term now, but the word – and concept – of “branding” really did come from the hot iron that cowboys used to differentiated cattle. Now, the American Marketing Association considers “branding” anything from symbols, names, designs or any feature that identifies one seller's goods from another. While the National Wildlife Refuge System is a brand, it is not a top-of-the-consciousness brand; that must change if the conservation community is to expand. Using technology – from the Web to QR codes and more – can help promote the brand. Technology also can – and should – help facilitate the exchange of ideas and information to create communities of practice within the field of conservation.

Deliverable 1: Web Strategic Communications Plan

- *Description:* Analyze and plan how to strategically communicate through the Refuge System Web site that national wildlife refuges are central to the quality of American life, including for such essentials as clean air and clean water.
- *Approach:* A firm versed in Web communications/strategic marketing/design will be hired to help draft a strategic plan.
- *Major Milestones:* A Statement of Work will be drafted in April 2012 for a contractor.
- *Coordination Need:* Refuge System Branch of Information Technology Management; Community Partnerships, Scientific Excellence and Urban Refuge Initiative implementation teams.

Deliverable 2: Survey the public

- *Description:* Baseline surveying is fundamental to judging the effectiveness of a strategic plan that targets a national knowledge gap. The Refuge System needs to understand exactly where it stands in the public consciousness.
- *Approach:* A marketing firm will be hired to organize focus groups to test messages and gauge general knowledge/understanding of the Refuge System. A sub-team headed by Susan Morse and Theresa Waswick will handle the task in concert with a marketing firm and communications professionals within the Fish and Wildlife Service.
- *Major Milestones:* A Statement of Work will be drafted in April 2012 for a contractor.
- *Coordination Need:* Urban Wildlife Refuge Initiative, Community Partnerships, Interpretation & Environmental Education, Hunting, Fishing & Outdoor Recreation; National Wildlife Refuge Association, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation.

Deliverable 3: New Media Policy and Academy

- *Description:* Field station staff as well as regional and Washington Office staff need to be empowered to use new technology and social media – beyond Facebook and Twitter – to

communicate with publics that increasingly use smartphones and are enticed by the newest communications modes. The policy should be standard, but also flexible in order to welcome new ideas and new technology. Among issues to be tackled: how to help field staff anticipate emerging communications tools; guidance for apps; consistent URLs for refuges and use of Profile pages in age of CMS; easy of approval for media just emerging. The Academy would help Service staff deliver core messages to multicultural citizens in urban areas.

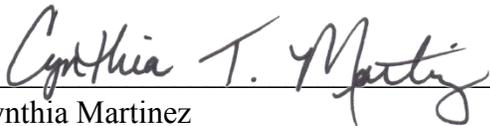
- *Approach:* A sub-team with members Catherine Hibbard and Bruce Butler will work with the Service’s new media coordinators to ensure consistent approach that ensures the FWS is flexible enough for new ideas. Heather Dewer of the Refuge System will assist.
- *Coordination Need:* FWS new media coordinators; regional offices of external affairs; Refuge System Branch of Information Technology.

Deliverable 4: Web-based Staff, Subject Matter Expert locator; Interactive Mapping Tool

- *Description:* FWS Staff, media and partners should be able to identify and find FWS staff and subject matter experts and to know at the touch of a computer mouse what is being studied (abiotic & biotic) on refuges nationwide. Additionally, the Refuge System must ensure that up-to-date technology is being employed, including providing updated wildlife refuge boundary information added to Google data.
- *Approach:* Team members Andrew Gude, Justin Epting and Cinthia Eichhorn have been tasked to create a sub-team.
- *Major Milestones:* Geospatial web-portal served out of Lakewood with browser allowing for queries. (The map template should also be used in Recommendation 14 for the Refuge System map for a consistent look.)
- *Coordination Need:* Work with I&M/GIS/IT professionals in regions, Refuge System, and nationally; the Natural Resources Program Center (I&M) in Fort Collins; and Scientific Excellence implementation team.

Success and Evaluation: Among the gauges of success will be increased visitation; greater number of media calls when experts in scientific excellence are sought; more ethnic diversity among visitors and Refuge Friends; an increase in Refuge Friends members; and a greater number of unique visitors to the Refuge System Web site.

Executive Implementation Council Approval:



 Cynthia Martinez
 Deputy Assistant Director – National Wildlife Refuge System
 U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

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 Date