

Draft Communications Plan

Thames River Aquatic Species at Risk

Recovery Implementation Group - Communications
July, 2005

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1.0 Background

1.1 The Thames River Recovery Team

The Thames River Recovery Team was formed in 2000 and has representatives from Chippewa of the Thames First Nation, Munsee-Delaware Nation, Oneida of the Thames First Nation, Delaware First Nation, Environment Canada, the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, the Upper Thames River Conservation Authority, the Lower Thames Valley Conservation Authority, and the Middlesex Stewardship Council. The team completed four background reports on the river and its species at risk (SAR) before developing the Recovery Strategy. The Recovery Team recognizes that the development of a successful Recovery Plan can only take place with the full involvement and support from stakeholders in the watershed. Partnerships, awareness and stewardship are important components of the Recovery Strategy. Protecting and rehabilitating habitat, monitoring and research are also integral to the Strategy.

Recovery Goal:

The long-term goal of this recovery strategy is to sustain and enhance the native aquatic communities of the Thames River through an ecosystem approach that focuses on species at risk.

Short-Term Recovery Objectives:

- Maintain the current geographical distributions and abundances of species at risk.
- Improve water and habitat quality by reducing sediment loads and nutrient and chemical inputs and ensuring base flow rate is maintained.
- Reduce the risk of the introduction of exotic species in the watershed.
- Establish a broad-based monitoring program that assesses the physical, chemical and biological characteristics of the system.
- Enhance the understanding of key aspects of the Thames River ecosystem that will lead to further refinement and prioritization of essential recovery actions (an adaptive management approach).
- Promote stewardship by encouraging a sense of public ownership and involvement among landowners, stakeholders, those working in the watershed and other interested citizens.
- Generate awareness regarding the Thames River and the significance of its natural heritage.

1.2 Recovery Implementation Groups

Two Recovery Implementation Groups (RIG's) were established in the spring of 2005 (Stewardship RIG, and the Communications RIG). This plan summarizes and places into context many of the initiatives planned and/or underway by the Communications RIG. The activities of this group relate to the last two objectives listed above.

The development of the Recovery Strategy has raised awareness of the uniqueness of the Thames River, but local knowledge of the species at risk remains low throughout the watershed. Communication needs to be directed at particular audiences within the watershed.

The group specifically intends to:

- Increase the awareness and appreciation of the landowners and general public for the significance of the Thames River and its species at risk
- Increase awareness of incentive programs available, and Best Management Practices, to promote good land stewardship which will aid in the recovery of the species at risk
- Increase awareness of the threat from exotic species
- Disseminate information throughout the watershed on recovery actions of the recovery groups and encourage participation with these actions
- Work in conjunction with the Stewardship Implementation Group to aid them with their objectives
- Influence attitude and behaviour change toward a healthy watershed

1.3 Thames River Habitat Stewardship Program (TRHSP)

This is a program that is running concurrently with the initiatives of the Thames River Recovery Plan. The Upper Thames River Conservation Authority, and the Lower Thames Valley Conservation Authority with funds from Environment Canada, are coordinating this program with significant input and support from the recovery team. With these funds, several of the initiatives outlined in the communications plan are now underway.

2.0 Target Groups

2.1 Landowners in the Watershed

Landowners within the Thames watershed can have a significant impact on Thames River, either negatively or positively based on level of stewardship practices on the land. Landowners are often excellent stewards of the land and can be an excellent source of long term support.

2.2 Municipal Partners

Municipalities are the key partner of conservation authorities from a planning and implementation perspective. Municipalities within the Thames watershed will be a key factor in the success or failure of the recovery plan.

2.3 Industry/Business & Agricultural Organizations

Targeting agriculture and other business/industry organizations has a two-fold advantage. First, industry/business/agriculture may have a direct impact on the Thames River through such activities as direct discharge, storm water, land management practices etc. In addition, business can be a source of financial support for specific initiatives related to the recovery strategy and can provide an opportunity to inform and involve employees and members.

2.4 Outdoor/Naturalist Organizations

These groups represent members who have an interest in the quality of the aquatic habitat of the Thames River. These groups can also be significant partners in recovery planning, implementation and communications.

2.5 Youth

Young people are very keen to learn about environmental issues. They provide an excellent opportunity to create a future generation with a greater understanding of aquatic ecosystems and aquatic species at risk. These children also have parents and teachers/leaders who often attend activities, increasing the effectiveness of targeting this group.

2.6 General Public

This, obviously, is a large and difficult to reach group. Informing the general public through a targeted media campaign will help to build broad based support for the initiatives and will help identify individuals who might want to become involved in the recovery process.

2.7 Federal & Provincial Government (M.P.P.'s, M.P.'s)

Information and events generated by the Communications RIG will be forwarded to key contacts at the provincial and federal government levels. Staff and elected officials will be kept informed.

2.8 Thames River Stewardship RIG -

Information and tools generated by this RIG can be communicated to other RIG's to assist in their efforts.

3.0 Key Messages

- a) There are aquatic species at risk that live in the Thames River, many of them provincially, nationally and even internationally significant.
- b) Species at Risk are an indicator of environmental health
- c) Good water quality is good for all species
- d) What we do on the land impacts the habitat quality of aquatic species at risk
- e) Stewardship initiatives will be extremely important to the recovery of aquatic species at risk in the Thames River. Stewardship programs have been developed to pro-actively work with landowners to minimize non-point source pollution and enhance riparian habitat. These are programs based on voluntary participation.
- f) The aquatic health of the river and its tributaries are being monitored
- g) Reduce the risk of introduction of exotic species to the river.

4.0 Communications Tools

4.1 Branding

A large number of promotional items will be produced over the life of this initiative. The Thames River Aquatic Species at Risk logo has been an effective introduction. Consideration should be given to building the brand with other species at risk programs within southwestern Ontario. Conservation Ontario branding should also be linked to all products.

4.2 Target Strategies

Landowners in the Watershed			
Tool	Explanation	Priority	Status
Brochures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - brochure promotes stewardship projects on private lands e.g. Softshell Turtle Stewardship Guide, Clean Water Project - in support of efforts of the Stewardship RIG - distributed to key audiences - relates to messages a,b,c,d 	1	complete
Display	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - develop a display for use at expos, etc. and relates to messages a,b,c,d,e,f,g 	1	complete (consider updating)
Best Management Practices Booklets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - BMP booklets are available from OMAF - make them available a shows and expos -relates to messages a,b,c,d,f,g 	1	complete
Power Point Presentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - presentation that can be adapted for target audiences - relates to messages a,b,c,d,e,f,g 	1	complete
Environment Action Days	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - corporate/community action days (e.g. community forestry, turtle habitat, stream rehabilitation) - relates to messages a,b,c,d,e,f,g 	1	ongoing
Field Trips	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - trips to example projects on the property of landowners - relates to messages a,b,c,d,e,f,g 	2	ongoing

Municipal Partners			
Tool	Explanation	Priority	Status
Guides, poster, fact sheets, magnets, stickers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - promote stewardship projects in support of efforts of the Stewardship RIG - help distribute to key audiences - relates to messages a,b,c,d,e 	1	partially complete
Display	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - develop a display for use at expos, etc. and relates to messages a,b,c,d,e,f,g 	1	complete (consider updating)
Power Point Presentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - presentation that can be adapted for target audiences - relates to messages a,b,c,d,e,f,g 	1	complete
Environment Action Days	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - corporate/community action days (e.g. community forestry, turtle habitat, stream rehabilitation, river clean up days) - relates to messages a,b,c,d,e,f,g 	1	ongoing
Field Trips	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - trips to example projects on the property of landowners - relates to messages a,b,c,d,e,f,g 	2	ongoing

River Signage	- place educational/awareness signs at strategic locations along the river, working in partnership with municipalities (e.g. parks, launch areas) - relates to messages a,b,c,d,e,f,g	2	ongoing
River Clean Up Day	- sponsor/help in a river clean day (e.g. promote, garbage pick up) - relates to messages a,b,c,	3	annual event

Industries/Business and Agricultural Organizations			
Tool	Explanation	Priority	Status
Poster	- send letter and poster - relates to messages a	1	ongoing
Power Point Presentation	- presentation to groups - relates to messages a,b,c,d,e,f	1	ongoing
Display/Exhibits	- develop a display for use at wellness fairs, conferences, agricultural fairs and events, etc. - relates to messages a,b,c,d,e,f	1	complete
Environment Action Days	- corporate/community action days (e.g. community forestry, turtle habitat, stream rehabilitation, river clean up days) - relates to messages a,b,c,d,e,f	1	ongoing
River Clean Up Day	- sponsor/help in a river clean day - relates to messages a,b,c,	3	annual event

Outdoor/Naturalist Organizations			
Tool	Explanation	Priority	Status
Display/Exhibits	- develop a display for use at community fairs and events, conferences etc. relates to messages a,b,c,d,e,f	1	complete
Power Point Presentation	- presentation to groups - relates to messages a,b,c,d,e,f	1	complete
Submit articles	- submit articles to magazines/newsletters used/produced by organizations targeted - relates to messages a,b,c,d,e,f	1	on-going
Poster	- SAR poster popular with members of these groups - distribute at events - mail a supply to organizations for use as prizes - relates to messages a	1	on-going

Field Trips	- arrange field trips for members of organizations to see work of the RIG's and see some of the SAR - relates to messages a,b,c,d,e,f	3	Annual Tour
River Clean Up Day	- have an organization sponsor/help in a river clean day - relates to messages a,b,c	2	annual event
Environment Action Days	- corporate/community action days (e.g. community forestry, turtle habitat, stream rehabilitation) - relates to messages a,b,c,d,e,f	1	ongoing
Website	- develop interactive website, link with information, projects, etc - relates to messages a,b,c,d,e,f	2	ongoing
River Signage	- place educational/awareness signs at strategic locations along the river, working in partnership with municipalities (e.g. parks, launch areas) - relates to messages a,b,c,d,e,f	2	ongoing

Youth			
Tool	Explanation	Priority	Status
Education Program	- establish and aquatic SAR tied to the school curriculum for specific grades - incorporate aquatic SAR elements into existing education programs - present programs (adapted) to various youth groups such as green wings, LWI young naturalists, scouts, guides etc. - relates to messages a,b,c,e	1	complete
Poster	- SAR poster popular with members of these groups - distribute at events - mail a supply to organizations for use as prizes - relates to messages a	1	complete
River Clean Up Day	- have a youth group help in a river clean day - relates to messages a,b,c,	3	annual event
Website	- enhance website to be student friendly by providing material that will specifically help in student papers and fun pages for younger students - relates to messages a,b,c,d,e,f,g	1	to be done
Environment Action Days	- corporate/community action days (e.g. community forestry, turtle habitat, stream rehabilitation) - relates to messages a,b,c,d,e,f,g	1	ongoing

General Public			
Tool	Explanation	Priority	Status
Display/Exhibits	- develop a display for use at rural and community fairs and events, plowing match, outdoor shows, conferences etc. relates to messages a,b,c,d,e,f,g	1	complete/ on-going
Submit articles to media	- submit articles to news media - relates to messages a,b,c,d,e,f,g	1	on-going
PSA	- complete a Public Service Announcement (video) to television station (New PL and/or CKCO) - combine with other SAR initiatives in neighbouring watersheds (i.e. Thames, Ausable) - relates to messages a,b,c	1	complete
Website	- enhance website to be more user friendly and interesting to lay people - develop measures to drive hits onto the Website such as a postcard; website references on all literature/promotional material; Website related activities tied to school programs etc. - relates to messages a,b,c,d,e,f,g	1	to be done
Signage on River Access Points	- erect signage promoting SAR and CHRS at access points along the River i.e. Conservation Areas, boat ramps etc. - relates to messages a,b,c,f,g	1	to be done
Environment Action Days	- corporate/community action days (e.g. community forestry, turtle habitat, stream rehabilitation) - relates to messages a,b,c,d,e,f,g	1	ongoing
River Clean Up Day	- sponsor/help in a river clean day - relates to messages a,b,c,	3	annual event

Federal & Provincial Government			
Tool	Explanation	Priority	Status
Updates	- prepare and distribute updates on the activity of the RIG's at strategic times (e.g. news release) - relates to messages a,b,c,d,e,f,g	1	on-going
Environment Action Days	- corporate/community action days (e.g. community forestry, turtle habitat, stream rehabilitation) - relates to messages a,b,c,d,e,f,g	1	ongoing
Field Trips	- arrange field trips for members of organizations to see work of the RIG's and see some of the SAR - relates to messages a,b,c,d,e,f,g	3	Annual Tour

Thames River Stewardship Recovery Implementation Group (RIG)			
Tool	Explanation	Priority	Status
Updates	- prepare and distribute updates on the activity of the RIG's at strategic times (e.g. news release) - relates to messages a,b,c,d,e,f,g	1	on-going
Power Point Presentation	- presentation to groups - relates to messages a,b,c,d,e,f,g	1	on-going
Website	- enhance Website to have access to RIG members with meeting minutes, updates, comments etc. - relates to messages a,b,c,d,e,f,g	1	to be done
Environment Action Days	- corporate/community action days (e.g. community forestry, turtle habitat, stream rehabilitation) - relates to messages a,b,c,d,e,f,g	1	ongoing