

1. Project Summary

Summarize the implementation of the project and describe how you achieved the grant deliverables.

Midshore Riverkeeper Conservancy (MRC) conducted formative research on the attitudes and behaviors associated with home lawn maintenance and fertilizer use in order to identify the barriers and benefits associated with changing that behavior in Talbot and Queen Anne's Counties in Maryland. MRC translated the results of this research into messages and materials that have been pilot tested and are ready to serve as the platform for a lawn fertilizer behavior change campaign.

After reviewing research from previous and similar fertilizer use studies from across the country, MRC conducted a formal assessment of the target audience in order to determine their specific knowledge, attitudes, motivations, and behaviors relative to lawn fertilizer use. This research of the target audience was conducted in two stages. During the first stage, we conducted 20 personal interviews, two focus groups, and a survey. This stage identified baseline attitudes and behaviors of our audience relative to lawn fertilization. For the second stage, we developed proposed messages from our baseline study. These messages were tested in a focus group and additional interviews at the annual Waterfowl Festival in Easton.

Actions taken during these phases included preparing the screening instrument for focus group participant recruiters, preparing moderator's guides for the focus groups and designing the survey instrument and questionnaire for interviewers. We conducted the surveys online and the interviews by phone or in person. With over 430 survey respondents, MRC achieved a 90% confidence in accuracy of our data received (with a 4% error calculation). This was calculated using the Survey Random Sample Calculator tool. A summary of survey results is attached. Additionally, MRC conducted three focus groups with 10-12 participants and audio recorded each group discussion. The groups were then studied and coded by MRC staff. We prepared a moderator's report on the groups, summarizing the findings. See attached.

There were three barriers that MRC discovered during this phase. The first was a knowledge barrier. There are some homeowners who are ignorant of the negative effects of excessive lawn fertilizer use. Within this group of homeowners there are many misguided ideas of best management practices. Some of our focus group participants claimed to be using best practices but were not. The second barrier MRC is an attitude barrier. A green lawn reflects a homeowner's values, pride, socio economic status, and community acceptance. Maintaining one's lawn is a public action, and people do not want to be perceived poorly because they do not have a green lawn. Finally, MRC will need to fight the influence of the lawn care industry. Scotts has a 4-step fertilizing plan, and MRC is advocating for a serious reduction by suggesting that fertilizing once in the fall (if at all) is sufficient. Multiple focus group participants claimed to fertilize at least 4 times simply because Scotts recommends it.

Benefits that came up frequently in both personal interviews and focus groups were cost

savings to the homeowner and the health and safety of children and family pets. There was some indication that the target audience could be motivated by the knowledge that fertilizing practices can affect local water quality, especially if given to them in a scientific manor or highlighting that it is not just agriculture in this area that is polluting.. Methods of implementing the campaign were also researched and surveyed. Most popular dissemination methods include billboards, social media, and newspaper articles.

Based on the findings and research, MRC has compiled a Social Marketing Plan discussing our marketing strategies, messages, and evaluation plan for a complete fertilizer use behavior change campaign (See attached).

In light of the Trust's commitment to the advancement of diversity in its grant-making, please provide demographic information regarding the community or population that benefited from or were served by the project. Describe how the population and/or community were involved in the planning, development, and implementation of the project, and if applicable in the development of this report.

Our target audience for this project was homeowners with lawns in Talbot and Queen Anne's Counties. Talbot County has a population of 38,098, of which 26% are 65 years and over, and the median household income is \$63,399 a year. There are 19,645 housing units in Talbot County and there is a 75% ownership rate. About 84% of the county is Caucasian and 13% is African American. The 2012 census for Queen Anne's County reflects a similar demographic. Queen Anne's County has a population of 48,517 and 20,303 housing units with an ownership rate of 86%. The median household income is \$84,483 a year. About 90% of the county is Caucasian and 7% is African American.

The population of these communities directly contributed to the planning and implementation of this project, as their primary motivations and behaviors will shape our future behavior change campaign. The community itself also influenced our planning. Talbot County contains about 25,000 acres of turf and Queen Anne's County contains between 40,000 to 50,000 acres. Center for Watershed Protection survey work revealed that the demographic most likely to fertilize multiple times a year are older, college educated, homeowners who make an annual income of \$50,000 or higher (CWP, supra, 2000). The residents of Talbot and Queen Anne's counties reflect these demographics.

Describe any public involvement in the project that has occurred, including the specific roles of volunteers in project activities. Describe in detail any outreach or educational activities (e.g. workshops, trainings, public events etc.).

There was little public involvement in this phase of the project as it was the research and testing phase. Focus group meetings were advertised in local newspapers and public locations. Surveys were also given out at local community events, but were not well advertised so as not to attain biased results. MRC piloted sample slogans and campaign ideas while tabling at events to gain more input and thoughts from the public.

Could we put something in here about Dan Watson and Jean's involvement as members of their HOA's?

2. Project Evaluation

Provide a written evaluation of the project that addresses the following points: Describe how you assessed the effectiveness of your message and the tactics you used to deliver it. What specific program / project design elements worked and for whom? Based on your program recipient's response how will you refine and improve your program or project in the future?

If your project included survey and assessment work of your target audience, please include the results of that survey work as an attachment to this report. Finally, describe your greatest success and the biggest challenge. What advice would you give someone considering a similar project?

MRC successfully assessed the current behaviors, motivations, barriers and benefits associated with lawn fertilizer use in Talbot and Queen Anne's Counties. Completion of this project has resulted in a Social Marketing Plan for a behavior change campaign that MRC intends to pursue in 2015. While we have not yet released messages, we have developed a plan to assess the effectiveness of our planned messages as well as the tactics we will use to deliver them.

Our greatest success for this project was the number of people we reached through our surveys and interviews. The ability to use nonbiased events, such as the annual Waterfowl Festival, were instrumental in gaining insight on messages from locals. By encouraging board members, volunteers, and friends to share our survey, we were able to reach our goal of respondents without distributing the survey to our environmentally biased membership. Personal interviews provided unique opportunities to gain valuable insight on not only fertilizer behaviors, but also what motivations they would need to change that behavior. Interviewees were able to talk candidly without influence from others. We received some of our most useful insights from studying and coding these personal interviews.

Our greatest success was also our greatest challenge. Distributing the survey through non-environmental avenues was difficult. There were not many events we were able to table that either did not have an environmental theme or did not present MRC as an environmental group. We overcame this challenge by using more personal avenues with MRC staff, such as bringing surveys to gyms and sporting events in the area. Our advice to other organizations attempting a similar project would be to create a plan of survey distribution. Much like the Social Marketing Plan that we created for our planned behavior change campaign, a similar plan would have been helpful for this phase of the project.