

## **This is what was approved:**

### **Public Outreach & Communications Plan**

DJ Public Relations will develop a strategic public outreach and communications plan for the Hillsborough Soil and Water Conservation District. This plan will include:

- Key facts and messages that can be used in all communication pieces.
- Goals and measurable objectives.
- A series of strategies and corresponding tactics to reach goals and objectives.
- Tampa Bay area media list, including targeted, industry-specific outlets that reach the District's main stakeholders.
- A list of stakeholders, including those directly impacted by the work of the District, as well as other individuals/organizations who may be interested in the work of the District.
- A series of topics that could be used for media campaigns, in order to receive positive media coverage for the District.
- Research into what other districts around the state and country are doing to proactively communicate with their stakeholders – in order to obtain best practices.
- A list of events that the District could participate in.
- A sample boiler plate that can be used on all news releases (a boiler plate is short statement placed at the end of every news release that gives details about the organization.)
- A cursory review of the website to provide suggestions for improvements/changes.

This plan will be developed so that District staff could implement it, or you could contract with DJ Public Relations to implement.

**Total Cost – not to exceed \$2,500**

### **Major points from Supervisor interviews:**

#### Gretchen Hoke

- Concerned with the preservation of the history of agriculture. (Turkey Creek Middle School could become an agricultural magnet school.)
- The Soil & Water Conservation District can help agricultural users and landowners on relationship building with city and county officials. District can also serve as a conduit for its stakeholders with government.
  - There are grants available - but could be confusing to older farmers.
- In conservation, the biggest problem is apathy and education. Inaccurate information is a problem. Lack of transparency is a problem.

- District stakeholders: members of the agricultural community are the main stakeholders. When talking about the “general public” as a stakeholder, it should focus on youth.
  - Youth – to educate them about the importance of ag industry.
  - There are so many things you can do in the classroom. She is concerned we are losing the youth wanting to be involved in agriculture.
- Hillsborough County Hazard Mitigation Plan – the District should be working on this with the county.
- Other priorities: bridging gaps; building relationships with agricultural producers, SWFWMD, and Hillsborough County. District needs to focus on its image and how people perceive it.

#### Aly Sullivan

- She wants to make sure that people learn the importance of agriculture.
- District stakeholders: Landowners, farmers, business owners with land, those that work with water, agricultural industry, youth.
- Community outreach is different from day-to-day activities to help stakeholders.
- Hillsborough County Hazard Mitigation Plan – the District should be aware of the plans and how to help stakeholders during emergencies.

#### Robert “Myke” Morris

- Numerous other agencies already work on water conservation measures. We should be supporting other agencies that are already doing this – partnering opportunities.
- District’s focus needs to be much more on urban/suburban farms (used Gretchen’s as an example.)
- Regarding funding, he believes since Hillsborough County funds the District, it needs to serve all citizens of Hillsborough County.
- He is very supportive of working in the schools with the youth.
- The District needs to find its niche and make it their own.
  - He mentioned working with HOAs about soil conservation. Older farmers understand about soil conservation, but not younger farmers and the average citizen.
  - Teach parents about fertilization timing.
  - Disposal of pesticides.
- Hazard Mitigation Plan – he isn’t sure it is as much of importance as other things we discussed. Farmers have been educated about proper disposal and are generally very careful. If not, it will cost them their business. There are enough other organizations out there watching this and checking on them.

Major Issues:

- No strong mission or strategy – What is it that you do?
- No system in place to measure your success or failure in achieving your goals.
- Mistrust among major stakeholders
- Average Hillsborough County resident doesn't know who you are.

Major Questions:

- Who are your main stakeholders?
- What problems do they need you to fix for them?
- What misconceptions about the Conservation District are out there that we need to fix?
- What does the general public know about the Conservation District?
- How can you differentiate yourselves from other like organizations that are similar to you?

Bottom Line: In order to develop and implement a Public Outreach and Communications Plan, we need to know the overall mission and strategy of the District, as well as the priorities of the District for the next year. Those priorities could be either project-specific or educational for stakeholders.

