How to Build a Successful River Steward Program

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Why We Needed a River Steward Program

- Description of the Farmington - Geographic area, W&S ORVs
- Local concerns of trashing and overuse, effects on ORVs
- Reports from other NGOs, state and local officials
- Respond to rise in river use (tubing is popular, Farmington on TV)
Research: Fact Finding on Your River

- Confirm reports from your own river
- Pinpoint biggest issues and define user groups. Look for allies.
- Focus outreach to key players
- On FR litter, alcohol, lack of coordination, user interaction, fishing violations are main problems
- Understand the difference between bait casters vs fly fishermen, paying vs private tubers, urbanites vs suburbanites
More Research: Learning from Other Rivers

- Visit in person if you can
- What outreach methods work best for your setting?
- Consider: river access, outreach on land vs water, enforcement
- Look at: signage, literature, when do stewards work, local ordinances
Create a Plan - Things to Consider

- Funds for paid positions vs volunteers
- Hours for the team, how will they be managed
- Use technology to communicate with team- text, email, online schedule (google sheets)
- Do you need enforcement (probably yes!)
- How can you reach people on and around your river best?
- Try to have your team reflect the makeup of your user groups
- Create support materials
- Build a website
- Have consistent messaging (NGNT)
- Enlist user groups and/or volunteers
- Keep community informed (newsletter, blog, social media, networking)
Building Your Team and Local Network

- Advertise the position (web, social media, email blasts, local college recruiting, newspaper ads)
- Pre-Season Training, Paperwork, Steward Handbook
- Meet with local and state officials, outdoors groups and law enforcement you may interact with
- Announce program, encourage cooperation
What Duties Might Your Steward Team Perform?

- Education: NGNT, River Safety, Pack out What You Pack In
- Source of Information (W&S ORVs, Fishing, Invasives, Access, Locations)
- Lectures, Educating Youth
- Social Media Presence
- River Cleanups
- Literature Handouts
- Invasive Plant Removal
- Riverbank Restoration
- Boat/Wader Cleaning Stations
- Report River Hazards
- Engage Local Businesses
What Works Well?

- Partnering up
- Moving around often
- Speaking to groups (Educational Series, local events like 4th of July Parade)
- Instill values at young age
- Being on water with a boat
- Being helpful and non-confrontational
- Engaging users before they put in
What Doesn’t Work So Well

- Staying in one spot for too long (they will avoid you if given the chance)
- Reasoning with people after they have been drinking
- Getting involved with issues that should be left to law enforcement

Remember what may not work on one river may on another
Will You Need Enforcement?
The Right Combination of Education, Outreach, and Enforcement

- Try different things and see what works in your area
- Instill a sense of ownership of the river to users
- Unfortunately 10-15% of people cannot be reached by education alone, enforcement will be needed
Assessing the Effectiveness of Your Program

- Is litter noticeably down?
- Are people aware of the existence of your Steward Program?
- Surveys and data collection, hits to website
- Perhaps local ordinance will get passed supporting your efforts
- Is law enforcement helping?
- Do potential river volunteers start to contact you?
- Are you asked to participate in other local events?
Thank You! - Questions, Suggestions and Examples from the Audience