

American Association of Port Authorities  
**2007 Environmental Awards Competition**  
**Stakeholder Awareness, Education & Involvement Category**

Port of Portland  
Environmental Outreach and Communication Program

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## Introduction – Paper Highlights

The Oregon Legislature created the Port of Portland (Port) more than 100 years ago to facilitate marine trade and connect Pacific Northwest businesses and producers with world markets. To serve the region today, the Port of Portland owns and operates four marine terminals, Portland International Airport, two regional general aviation airports, and seven industrial parks that support marine, aviation, and other industrial activities. The Port's facilities are the foundation for the region's cost-effective air/rail/barge/road transportation system. The mission of the Port is to “provide competitive cargo and passenger access to regional, national, and international markets while enhancing the region's quality of life.”

The Port's four marine terminals comprise 1,017 acres and include container, auto, mineral, break bulk, liquid bulks, grain, and other material handling facilities. The marine terminals also include warehouse and intermodal rail yard operations. The Port's maritime operation is the largest exporter of wheat in the United States, and the Columbia River region is the third largest grain export center in the world. In addition, the Port is the 29th largest U.S. port in terms of total tonnage, the 17th largest container port, and the fifth largest auto port in the country. The regional benefits derived from marine activity in Portland Harbor are varied and numerous. Marine activities influence 19,000 local jobs in the Portland metropolitan area, producing \$1.4 billion in income to the local economy and \$995 million in business revenues; \$14 billion worth of cargo moved through Portland Harbor in 2006.

A nine-member commission sets Port policy and appoints the Port's executive director, who is responsible for day-to-day management through six

Port directors. In 2001, the Port of Portland Commission adopted the Port's environmental policy: *"The Port will achieve its mission through responsible environmental stewardship and the implementation of proactive environmental programs. The Port will integrate environmental considerations into all aspects of its strategic planning and business decision-making."*

To further its environmental policy, mission, and strategic objectives, the Port established an Environmental Outreach and Communication Program. The Port's Environmental Outreach and Communication Program provides stakeholders with information about the Port's environmental programs and projects and a means for stakeholders to provide feedback to decision-makers. This two-way information exchange builds relationships that enhance the Port's ability to achieve its mission and is a model for effectively engaging the community in the environmental aspects of a port authority's work.

## **Goals and Objectives**

The Port undertakes annual long-term, strategic business planning that identifies areas of focus as well as the financial resources needed to carry out Port programs and ongoing operations. Almost every Port activity affects businesses, neighborhoods, government entities, labor force, residents, and the environment. Groups representing these interests often have conflicting desires, needs, and expectations. In order for the Port to make informed decisions, community stakeholders interested in or concerned about Port activities need to have frequent opportunities for frank exchanges of information and viewpoints about Port issues and plans. Consequently, beginning in fiscal year 2002-2003, the Port identified a strategic objective of strengthening stakeholder relationships,

and that objective has continued in successive years' strategic plans, including the strategic plan for the current year.

Specifically, the strategic objective is to “strengthen stakeholder involvement and communications and integrate stakeholder concerns into Port planning and decision making.” It includes three- to five-year strategies to achieve the objective:

- Foster early, open, inclusive, and ongoing engagement of stakeholders in Port planning and decision-making.
- Develop partnerships with government entities, business associations, and the community on initiatives of common concern.
- Work with communities to identify impacts (such as noise and traffic) associated with Port operations, and develop appropriate ways to address these impacts.
- Engage regional labor leaders in Port long-range and business planning.
- Develop communication programs that both educate and engage stakeholders on Port initiatives.

Finally, key desired results accompany the objective and strategies:

- The breadth of the Port's mission is increasingly understood, as reflected in community surveys.
- The Port is understood and trusted by key regional and community influencers and decision makers.

## Discussion

### Background

#### Community Integration Guidelines

The Port's Community Affairs Department developed Community Integration Guidelines (see accompanying .pdf file) to assist program and project managers in accomplishing the strategic objective of strengthened stakeholder relationships. Because the community interests and issues are unique for each program or project, the Community Integration Guidelines provide a menu of different approaches and tools for Port staff in the Community Affairs Department working in partnership with program and project managers to choose from in order to customize outreach and communications. The Community Integration Guidelines emphasize early consideration of whether a program or project will affect the community so that citizen and stakeholder interests can be incorporated into work plan scope and to help avoid or minimize anticipated conflicts.

The Community Integration Guidelines contain techniques and tools for each phase of the Port's Project Delivery System, from Project Initiation (performing a community assessment to identify potential community interests and impacts), to Chartering the Project Team and Work Plan Development (securing Community Affairs assistance on the team and developing an outreach and communications plan), to Project Closure (communicating project completion to the community and conducting appropriate follow-up from earlier phases of the project). Appendices to the Community Integration Guidelines provide checklists of potentially affected stakeholders (interest groups, community organizations, elected officials and their staff, and the business community) and stakeholder assessment considerations. The interest groups include environmental groups,

and the stakeholder assessment considerations include positive/negative impacts on wetlands, water quality, uplands, air quality, wildlife and habitat, endangered species, green space or open space, as well as noise, odor, and visual aesthetics.

Because so many of the Port's activities affect the environment, and because of heightened community interest in environmental matters within the Portland region, the Port created a staff position within the Community Affairs Department dedicated to informing and involving stakeholders about its environmental programs and projects: Environmental Outreach Manager. The Environmental Outreach Manager serves as the liaison between the Port and the public for environmental matters and manages general outreach and involvement for the Port's environmental programs as well as for particular projects, such as the Terminal 4 Sediment Cleanup described below. The Environmental Outreach Manager assists program and project managers in implementing the Community Integration Guidelines and accomplishing the Port's strategic objective of strengthened stakeholder relationships in order to further the Port's environmental policy as well as its overall mission.

## **Objectives and Methodology**

The objective of the Environmental Outreach and Communication Program is to inform and involve community stakeholders in environmental aspects of the Port's work. The Port addresses the environmental aspects of its work through programs that implement the Port's award-winning Environmental Management System (EMS). This includes programs such as air quality, water resources, natural resources, waste and recycling, and energy management. The Port also involves the community in environmental aspects directly related to

projects such as the Terminal 4 Sediment Cleanup. The Environmental Outreach Manager works with program and project managers to implement the tools and techniques described in the Community Integration Guidelines.

### Methodology: Coordination with Environmental Programs and Projects

Each year, the Environmental Outreach Manager identifies outreach and communication priorities in conjunction with program managers, the Port's Corporate Environmental Manager and the Port's Chief Environmental Officer. The environmental priorities align with the Port's business priorities. The Environmental Outreach Manager implements the tools and techniques described in the Community Integration Guidelines in accordance with the priorities.

For example, in fiscal year 2005-2006, the Port adopted a diesel emission reduction strategy. The Environmental Outreach Manager applied a number of tools and techniques to build understanding about the Port's efforts to reduce diesel emissions and minimize impacts on air quality. The tools included meetings hosted by the Port as well as meetings hosted by others. The Port included a discussion of the evolution of the Port's air quality program during the previous five years as well as the diesel emission reduction strategy in its Fall 2005 Environmental Forum. The Port's Environmental Forum is a periodic lunch meeting (the Port provides lunch) during which Port program managers update invited community stakeholders about particular initiatives and stakeholders ask questions and offer comments. For the Fall 2005 Environmental Program, the invitee list included stakeholders such the Environmental Justice Action Group (EJAG), an organization active in air quality issues in the key marine-surface transportation corridor of North Portland; the U.S. Environmental Protection



(EPA) Oregon Operations Office; and Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) Air Quality Program Manager.

The Environmental Outreach Manager also regularly attended the Portland North Neighborhoods Air Quality Committee (PNNAQC) meetings. EJAG created PNNAQC to provide a forum for collaboratively addressing North Portland air quality issues. Meeting participants included neighborhood air quality advocates, representatives of the (DEQ), Oregon Departments of Transportation (DOT) and Human Services (which is responsible for public health in Oregon), and environmental groups. The meeting participants shared information about initiatives to address air quality impacts, and the Environmental Outreach Manager shared information and answered questions about Port air quality work, including its use of ultra-low sulfur diesel, biodiesel and compressed natural gas, and other significant environmental accomplishments.

Another Community Integration Guideline technique applied by the Environmental Outreach Manager is to develop collaborative opportunities with public and private sector organizations. In 2006, the Environmental Outreach Manager and the Air Quality Program Manager represented the Port in the Oregon Solutions North Portland Diesel Emissions Reduction Project. Oregon Solutions is a program that uses the principles of collaboration, integration, and sustainability, which grew out of the State of Oregon's Sustainability Act of 2001, to promote sustainable community governance. The North Portland Diesel Emissions Reduction Project is a collaborative effort to find ways to reduce diesel emissions from heavy on-road, rail, and marine traffic as well as from off-road construction equipment. The group includes public and private entities such as fuel providers, trucking companies, and garbage and recycling haulers; the

Oregon DEQ and DOT, City of Portland, and Multnomah County health department; and non-profit organizations such as the Coalition for a Livable Future, Oregon Environmental Council, and EJAG.

The effort provided an opportunity to educate regulators, environmental groups, and local businesses about the unique business and operational circumstances of the Port of Portland, and to put the Port's Air Quality Program in context. Many of the stakeholders present were unaware that vessels calling on Portland spend little or no time "hoteling." Consequently, stakeholders gained a better understanding of why electrification efforts being implemented at Southern California ports may not be the most effective approach to marine vessel emissions in Portland. The project produced a Declaration of Commitment signed by 32 public and private entities, including the Port, which describes steps to reduce diesel emissions. The Port committed to setting annual targets through its EMS to minimize impacts to air quality, encouraging collaboration with external stakeholders to help them implement cost-effective strategies and sharing information about projects and the ongoing program to reduce diesel emissions through the Port's website and publications.

Other tools for informing and involving Port stakeholders include annual reporting on the Port's EMS performance, either through a separate printed or electronic Environmental Annual Report, or as part of *Portfolio*, an annual review of all the Port's work; *Port Currents*, the Port's newsletter of environmental and community news; the environmental programs section of the Port's website: [www.portofportland.com](http://www.portofportland.com); and electronic postcards notifying stakeholders of news about the Port's environmental programs or aspects of particular projects. The Port maintains an e-mail distribution list of thousands of stakeholders who have

signed up to receive these electronic notices. Finally, the Port hosts an annual Community Forum to provide an opportunity for citizens to meet the Port's Executive Director, learn about all of the Port's activities, ask questions, and provide feedback to Port staff in attendance. The Community Forum format and topics to be discussed are tailored to the community where it is being held. The Executive Director's remarks address priority environmental programs or projects. In 2006, the Port chose to host the Community Forum in the north Portland neighborhood of St. Johns in order to be accessible to the citizens living near marine Terminal 4 who were interested in the Terminal 4 Sediment Cleanup.

The Port's Terminal 4 Sediment Cleanup, a Superfund non-time critical removal action, provides an example of advancing the Port's strategic objective of strengthened stakeholder relationships, and the use of many of the Community Integration Guidelines' techniques within one project. One objective for the outreach component for the project was to educate citizens about the methods of cleaning up contaminated sediments. This supported the second objective: cultivating a fact-based conversation about cleanup rather than an emotionally reactive one. These objectives supported the Terminal 4 project as well as the Port's work on the broader Portland Harbor Superfund Cleanup involving multiple parties.

The Environmental Outreach Manager and Terminal 4 Sediment Cleanup Project Manager used a variety of the Community Integration Guideline tools and techniques to achieve the outreach objectives, including:

- Attending neighborhood association meetings of all the neighborhoods near Terminal 4 to share information about contaminated sediment cleanup methods;
- Creating fact sheets about each of the contaminated sediment cleanup methods (see attached .pdf example);
- Creating a project website with information about the project (including schedule and new developments) as well as contaminated sediment cleanup methods (see: [http://www.portofportland.com/T4\\_EA\\_Home.aspx](http://www.portofportland.com/T4_EA_Home.aspx));
- Arranging for stakeholders to visit two confined disposal facilities in the Puget Sound area\*;
- Hosting five open houses corresponding to different phases of the project (e.g., first open houses about general contaminated sediment cleanup methods, then the alternatives being considered for Terminal 4 and finally the alternative selected by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency); and
- Individual meetings with community and environmental stakeholders to listen to their feedback and answer questions about the project.

The outreach helped identify topics of concern, such as earthquakes and flooding, for the project to address specifically in meetings with community members. In total, the outreach helped educate more than 300 stakeholders

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\* The Port of Tacoma and City of Tacoma graciously hosted tours for Port staff and Portland stakeholders to view completed and under construction confined disposal facilities. A confined disposal facility is a routinely and successfully used method for managing contaminated sediments, but one that is new to Oregon.

about contaminated sediment cleanup methods in general and, more specifically, the Terminal 4 Sediment Cleanup Project.

## **How the Project Fulfills the Award Criteria**

1. The level and nature of benefits to environmental quality, beautification or community involvement.

The Port's Environmental Outreach and Communication Program is a comprehensive approach to involving community stakeholders in the Port's environmental work. It derives from the Port's strategic plan, which defines the Port's core work. It is incorporated into all aspects of the Port's environmental work – environmental programs and particular projects – through the Port's Community Integration Guidelines. It provides community stakeholders and Port decision-makers with direct access to one another in order to share information and build understanding. This access is through informal one-on-one meetings as well as larger Port-hosted gatherings such as the Environmental Forums and annual Community Forum. Information is available in multiple formats (written and electronic).

The benefits of the Environmental Outreach and Communication Program accrue to all those involved and the environment. Community members benefit by having multiple means for learning about the Port and sharing their ideas as well as their concerns with Port decision-makers. Similarly, the Port and Port staff benefit from having multiple means for informing the community about the Port's work. The ability to talk regularly helps build relationships and allows for early issue identification that can help prevent costly and time-consuming conflicts from developing. The broader environment benefits from the combination of a better-informed community and Port staff who, in turn, can more effectively manage the Port's proactive environmental projects and environmentally

responsible work. Increasingly, the Port's environmental accomplishments, like its business accomplishments, hinge on its ability to work in partnership with others. The Environmental Outreach and Communication Program is a key tool for building those partnerships.

## 2. The level of independent involvement and effort by the Port.

The Port independently developed the Environmental Outreach and Communication Program, but it integrates feedback and suggestions from stakeholders. Program implementation is consistent with the Port's Community Integration Guidelines. In the course of each outreach activity, the Environmental Outreach Manager makes sure that there is an opportunity for stakeholders to provide feedback about what information they would like to receive from the Port and how they would like to receive it as well as any other suggestions they wish to share.

For example, during a small group outreach meeting for the Terminal 4 Sediment Cleanup Project, a community member suggested having a confined disposal facility model available at an open house that the project team was planning. The project team acted on this suggestion by having a specially constructed model at the open house. The model was the most visited station at the open house. Importantly, the model accomplished more than helping community members understand a confined disposal facility. It also demonstrated that the Port was listening to the community member (who had been critical of the Port) and was willing to act on practicable feedback from the community member.

### 3. The creativity of the solution or programs.

Most ports have outreach and communication capacity within a public affairs or external affairs department. Outreach and communication are integral to cultivating an understanding of the role and value of a port in a community and in accomplishing a port's mission. The Port of Portland's approach is distinct in that it created a program and position devoted to environmental outreach and communication. The distinct program and position facilitates early and more integrated stakeholder involvement in the environmental programs and projects. The distinct program and position provide resources to customize outreach and communications to the particular program or project, and thereby increase the likelihood of a successful approach.

The existence of a distinct Environmental Outreach Manager position provided the Port's Terminal 4 Sediment Cleanup Program with a resource to conduct an unprecedented public involvement effort for a Superfund non-time critical removal action. There was no regulatory requirement for the Port to perform any outreach. The Port chose to inform and educate the community consistent with its strategic objective, to assist the project, to assist the Port's broader Portland Harbor cleanup work and more broadly to engage the community.

### 4. Whether the project or program results are apparent (the project must be complete through some beneficial increment)

The Environmental Outreach and Communication Program complements the Port's environmental programs and projects. It benefits the Port's environmental performance and its business practices, as well as that of the community by ensuring that the Port meets its regulatory obligations and continuously improves its environmental performance. Moreover, the program

serves as a means for an ongoing conversation with the community, thereby building an understanding of the context within which the Port operates and link between the Port's operations and its environmental work.

The Environmental Outreach Program has been particularly effective at building relationships and raising the level of knowledge about the Port's environmental work among environmental stakeholders and the more environmentally aware general public. This enhanced understanding results principally from direct engagement through small program or project-related meetings. For the Terminal 4 Sediment Cleanup Project, these meetings alerted the project team to community concerns (such as the stability of a confined disposal facility during an earthquake and the effect of flooding during construction) that could be addressed through outreach and project development efforts.

#### 5. The cost effectiveness of the activity or the program

The Environmental Outreach and Communication Program provides the Port's environmental program and project managers with a single public affairs point of contact and resource, the Environmental Outreach Manager, for their work. This saves program and project managers' time because there is a person who is informed about their programs and projects that can coordinate the outreach with other public affairs staff and work. Similarly, the Environmental Outreach Manager provides the Port's stakeholders with a single point of contact for obtaining information about Port environmental programs and projects. The Environmental Outreach Manager's involvement assures awareness of how the Port's multiple environmental programs and projects may affect one another from a public perspective. This awareness informs how the Port interacts with



stakeholders who may be involved in multiple Port projects involving different Port project managers who do not necessarily interact with one another. Finally, the Environmental Outreach and Communication Program helps project managers constructively engage stakeholders in order to avoid or minimize conflicts that can result in costly project disruptions and delay.

#### 6. The transferability of the technology or idea to the port industry

The concept of an Environmental Outreach and Communication Program can be readily transferred within the port industry. The Community Integration Guidelines provide a menu of different tools and options that port authority staff could adapt to their particular program or project needs. A larger or smaller port, division, or department within a port or port tenants could implement a dedicated outreach program and position to facilitate early and more focused outreach.

## Conclusion

Communications and outreach are the foundation for building constructive stakeholder relationships. Constructive stakeholder relationships are essential for ports to achieve their missions today and will continue to be essential in the future as ports face increasingly complex environmental issues. From global warming to invasive species to Superfund cleanups, environmental issues extend beyond ports' legal and physical boundaries, like the trade that ports enable. The Port of Portland's Environmental Outreach and Communication Program assures the existence of a two-way information exchange about the Port's environmental programs and projects. This dialogue has built understanding and relationships that enhance the Port's ability to achieve its mission now and in the future. The program is a model for effectively engaging the community in the environmental aspects of a port authority's work.