

Sea Duck Joint Venture Strategic Communications Plan



2015-2019

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The mission of the **Sea Duck Joint Venture** (SDJV) is to promote the conservation of North American sea ducks through partnerships by providing greater knowledge and understanding for effective management. SDJV focuses on the 15 species of North American sea ducks on their coastal water habitat for migration and wintering as well as boreal forest and tundra habitat for nesting. Since the JV's founding in 1998, the four pillars of its work have included science, communications, funding, and conservation.

For more information: www.seaduckjv.org

Five-Year Strategic Communications Plan

The purpose of the Strategic Communications Plan is to focus SDJV outreach and communications innovatively and strategically for the next 5 years. This plan will be a tool to advance the SDJV Strategic Plan and the partnership. The Communication Plan will further aid the JV in meeting the “Desired Characteristics for Species Joint Venture Partnerships” related to Communications, Education, and Outreach (Appendix A). The plan’s implementation section and capacity recommendations will position the JV to immediately begin “implementation” of the plan upon its completion.

Recommended Citation

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Executive Summary of the Strategic Communications Plan

The Sea Duck Joint Venture (SDJV) has developed this Strategic Communications Plan for 2015-2019 following a strategic communications planning approach. This plan will guide the communications efforts among SDJV staff, SDJV Continental Technical Team (CTT), Management Board, other partners, and contractors. The plan is focused on helping the SDJV address four goals:

- Goal 1. The SDJV contributes to scientific information about sea ducks and their habitats, and ensures that this information is readily available and used by stakeholders.
- Goal 2. SDJV partners collaborate on research and monitoring to address gaps in sea duck conservation and management.
- Goal 3. SDJV priority actions are implemented that advance sea duck conservation and management.
- Goal 4. The SDJV is widely recognized as the leading conservation program for sea ducks and has a strong and informed constituency for sea ducks.

The plan was informed by a **discovery phase**, assessing the state of SDJV communications; a **needs assessment**, where the Management Board, CTT members, and staff brainstormed opportunities and needs for communications; and an **audience assessment**, which involved interviews with individuals representing the SDJV's key audiences (see Appendices).

Communications campaigns were designed for each goal based on the information gathered from the audience assessment interviews. Target audiences, communications objectives, messages, and tactics and tools were defined for each goal. Evaluation metrics were identified for each of the primary tools, as well as an implementation timeline and estimated costs. Central themes of campaigns are to ensure that information needed by managers is made readily available, and to expand the partnership by making partners more aware of SDJV program and the science it is helping to generate.

Highest priority actions include a revision of the SDJV web site (with periodic e-blasts), developing an atlas of key sea duck habitats, developing a elevator talk(s), and instituting an annual report. These projects will be accomplished by SDJV staff, and by contractors as needed.

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Introduction

Since its inception, the SDJV has placed an emphasis on the collection of information and science about sea ducks because little was known about these birds. Now, with more information available, the time is right to communicate that information and ensure that it informs decisions. This communications plan is the first for the SDJV. The communications plan is intended to guide the communications efforts of the SDJV from 2015-2019. It follows a strategic communications approach (for more information, see Appendix A). The plan is informed by a review of the past SDJV communications strengths and weaknesses (Appendix B), a needs assessment workshop (Appendix C), and audience assessment interviews (Appendix D).

Communications Campaigns

Goals

The communications plan is designed to aid the SDJV in addressing four organizational goals:

- Goal 1. The SDJV contributes to scientific information about sea ducks and their habitats, and ensures that this information is readily available and used by stakeholders.
- Goal 2. SDJV partners collaborate on research and monitoring to address gaps in sea duck conservation and management.
- Goal 3. SDJV priority actions are implemented that advance sea duck conservation and management.
- Goal 4. The SDJV is widely recognized as the leading conservation program for sea ducks and has a strong and informed constituency for sea ducks.

Audiences

Audiences for SDJV communications are defined as those with the potential to influence SDJV goals for communications (Table 1). Priority audiences that the SDJV Management Board and CTT identified for communication efforts were the Management Board, Flyway Council, bird habitat Joint Ventures, Landscape Conservation Cooperatives, sea duck researchers, state and provincial wildlife agencies, federal wildlife agencies (i.e., USFWS and CWS), coastal environmental agencies, conservation NGOs, Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, and industry sectors related to sea ducks (e.g., energy). Certain organizations within an audience group or certain individuals within an organization may vary greatly in their potential to accomplish SDJV goals.

Communications Objectives & Messages

A communication objective is intended to influence behavior of an audience, which may first require raising awareness (knowledge change), then increasing concern (attitude change), then developing appropriate abilities (skill change) to obtain the ultimate action (behavior change). For more information, see Appendix E.

Behavioral objectives by audience and goal are listed in Table 1. The knowledge, attitudes, skills, and behavioral objectives for groups of audiences for each goal are listed in the Appendix E.

Table 1. Audiences and behavioral objectives for each goal.

Goal	Primary audiences	Behavioral Objectives (actions taken by audiences)
Goal 1. The SDJV contributes to scientific information about sea ducks and their habitats that is readily available and used by stakeholders.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sea duck researchers - Bird habitat joint ventures (JV) - LCCs - BOEM - Coastal management agencies 	<p>1.1. Provides resources (funds, skills, and data) to help the SDJV to obtain and organize information.</p> <p>1.2. Shares information with SDJV as a central repository for information</p>
Goal 2. SDJV partners collaborate on research and monitoring to address gaps in sea duck conservation and management.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sea duck researchers - Bird habitat JVs - LCCs - BOEM - State wildlife agencies - Federal wildlife agencies - Conservation NGOs - Subsistence users and co-management councils - Flyway Councils 	<p>2.1 Conducts research & monitoring.</p> <p>2.2 Partners on and/or funds research & monitoring of sea ducks.</p>
Goal 3. SDJV priority actions are implemented that advance sea duck conservation and management.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Bird habitat JVs - LCCs - State wildlife agencies - Federal wildlife agencies - Conservation NGOs - Subsistence users and co-management councils - Flyway Councils - Coastal management agencies - Industry - BOEM - Industry regulators 	<p>3.1 Uses information in harvest management.</p> <p>3.2 Uses information in habitat conservation.</p> <p>3.3 Uses information in industry decisions.</p>
Goal 4. The SDJV is widely recognized as the leading conservation program for sea ducks and has a strong and informed constituency for sea ducks.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Management Board - Subsistence users and co-management councils - Flyway Councils - Bird habitat JVs - LCCs - Federal wildlife agencies - Conservation NGOs 	<p>4.1 Voices support of sea duck science, conservation, and programs.</p> <p>4.2 Makes funding & policy decisions in support of sea duck science, conservation, and programs.</p>

Messaging. Overarching messages for each goal are below (Table 2). Additionally, each of the knowledge and attitudes objectives (see Appendix D) has been written so that it can easily provide the basis for more specific messaging.

Table 2. Overarching messages by goal.

Goals	Primary Messages
<p>Goal 1. The SDJV contributes to scientific information about sea ducks and their habitats that is readily available and used by stakeholders.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sea duck researchers supported by the SDJV have made great strides in filling essential knowledge gaps on sea ducks, particularly in the last two decades. • The SDJV facilitates information exchange by serving as a central repository for this information. • By making sea duck information readily accessible, the SDJV facilitates more effective application of information to make better decisions affecting research, habitat conservation, harvest management, and industrial development.
<p>Goal 2. SDJV partners collaborate on research and monitoring to address gaps in sea duck conservation and management.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Despite advances in knowledge, sea ducks remain the most poorly known group of waterfowl because they live in remote or offshore areas, are difficult to capture and mark, and are not surveyed well. • Fundamental information gaps about sea ducks limit our ability to make good decisions about conservation and management. • The SDJV partnership annually identifies priorities for research and management, and contributes funding to address these priorities. • The SDJV improves efficiency by fostering partnerships • Addressing these priorities will improve conservation decision-making about sea ducks for agencies, industries, bird habitat joint ventures, nonprofit conservation organizations, and others.
<p>Goal 3. SDJV priority actions are implemented that advance sea duck conservation and management.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Because sea ducks are closely tied to near-shore environments, understanding and monitoring sea duck populations provide insights into the overall health of the marine ecosystem over multiple scales. • SDJV has developed strategic and short-term implementation plans that identify and promote priority actions for sea duck research, monitoring, and conservation. • Implementation of these priority actions will reduce risks, and help prevent future listing of sea duck species as endangered, threatened, or species at risk. • The SDJV promotes objective research and encourages publication of results, ensuring credibility.

<p>Goal 4. The SDJV is widely recognized as the leading conservation program for sea ducks and has a strong and informed constituency for sea ducks.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sea ducks comprise a third of all North America waterfowl species. • People appreciate sea ducks for many reasons, including hunting, subsistence harvest in northern communities, viewing, and their beauty. • Many populations of sea ducks remain below historic levels, largely for unknown reasons. In fact, four species of sea ducks are federally listed as endangered or threatened species/species at risk in the U.S. or Canada. • We hope you will join us to positively affect sea duck conservation by elevating awareness of sea ducks and developing partnerships with the SDJV.
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Tactics & Tools

A variety of tactics and tools exist to contribute to achieving the SDJV’s communications objectives. In considering the appropriate tactics and tools for this Strategic Communications Plan, the Communications Working Group reviewed the SDJV’s current use of tactics and tools and also recommended whether tactics and tools would be appropriate for the SDJV to use in the future. We additionally considered any information about the tools from the interviews. We then linked the tactics and tools that the Working Group felt would be most appropriate with each of the goals and its objectives and key audiences (Table 3). The twelve key tactics and tools are: educational (workshops/trainings, one-on-one), informational (website, e-blast, elevator talk about SDJV, talking points about specific topics, factsheets, year-end report), organizational (committees, web/video conferences), and scientific (participation in conferences and meetings, atlas of habitat use). Additionally, social media will be considered once plan implementation is underway (within 2-3 years).

Table 3. Extent to which communications tactics and tools can help address goals and associated communications objectives.

	Goal 1. Scientific information is available	Goal 2. Collaborate on research	Goal 3. Priority action implemented	Goal 4. Strong and informed constituency
Educational				
Workshops/training	partially	fully	fully	partially
One-on-one	partially	fully	fully	fully
Informational				
Website	fully	partially	partially	fully
e-blasts	partially	partially	partially	fully
Elevator talk	partially	partially	partially	fully
Talking points about specific issues	partially	partially	partially	partially
Factsheets; call-to-action sheet	partially	partially	fully	partially
Annual report	fully	fully	partially	partially
Organizational				
Committees and working groups for specific issues	fully	fully	partially	partially
Web/video conference	partially	partially	partially	partially
Technical				
Participation in conferences	fully	fully	fully	partially
Atlas of habitat use	fully	partially	fully	partially

Designing & Delivering Tactics and Tools

While we created broad recommendations for the design and delivery of each tactic and tool, when implementing this plan and selecting the tactic or tool for delivering messages for a given audience, the SDJV should consider:

- Will the tool reach the audience and likely lead to achieving the goals and objectives?
- Will it transmit the message(s) well?
- Is there an existing tactic or tool available for our needs that we could use or edit?
- Is it cost effective and affordable to create this tool? Will it take a reasonable amount of time?
- Does the SDJV have the experience or skill for this type of communications? Or does a partner who could collaborate on the effort?

Recommendations:

- **Workshops/Training:** Workshops can be hosted at conferences or practitioner meetings to highlight how to use SDJV information. These workshops should:
 - highlight examples of how members of the user group can use the information, and
 - include case studies or presentations by those already using the information will be most helpful.

Workshops can also be conducted at research conferences to contribute to Goal 1. These workshops should:

- highlight data gaps;
 - identify what is already being studied and how researchers can collaborate in those studies;
 - provide examples of how the information will be/has been used; and
 - identify funding available and how to apply.
- **One-on-one communications:** One-on-one communications are essential for nearly all goals. For example, Goal 4, “A strong and informed constituency for sea ducks”, cultivating Management Board members as advocates for the SDJV will require one-on-communications between and among the Management Board, CTT, & the SDJV staff. At a minimum, this communication should occur at annual meetings, with one of the meetings including interaction between the Management Board and Technical Committee. Additionally, to ensure roles are understood one-on-one meetings will be important with both current and new Management Board and CTT members, particularly as assignments change with agency or NGO staffing changes. For Goal 3, ” Priority actions are implemented that advance sea duck conservation”, face-to-face meetings with and Management Board or CTT members and conservationists can ensure that the value of SDJV information is understood and that they know how to use it in their specific circumstances. Additionally, ensuring that these communications are two-way can be useful for helping better understand these audiences, what information they need, and how best to deliver it to them.
 - **Website:** The website will be redesigned in collaboration with a web developer. This will allow for a new content management system and advanced design. It should include:

- a new content management system that will enhance functionality and usability by the user and the staff managing the website;
- a restricted-access portal for sharing of internal SDJV documents;
- primary messages for each of the goals, as well as more specific information and resources; and
- calls to action, such as signing up for an email list.

New material should also be regularly added to the website, as well as updated.

E-blasts: E-blasts are formatted emails sent to an email list, using e-newsletter software. Shorter than an e-newsletter issue, they highlight key content and provide calls to action, rather than including articles. E-blasts could also be used to provide important updates or calls to action (e.g., apply for research grants). They can also draw audience members to the website to view new, updated, or otherwise important information. To create the e-blasts:

- Mail Chimp should be used, which allows mail list management and analytics to track readership;
- Develop an email list (starting with the email list from last SDJV conference) so the e-blasts can reach audience members associated with nearly every goal;
- Revisit the email list on an annual basis to ensure it includes key partners, as well as include an e-newsletter sign-up function on website and in eblast;
- Include a couple of catchy sentences and pictures for each piece of web content to draw readers to the website;
- Send e-blasts at regular intervals (~1-3 times/year).

- **SDJV elevator talk:** An elevator talk is a short, compelling summary to define the Joint Venture. The elevator talk should highlight key talking points about the SDJV mission, shared goals, structure, and value for staff, Management Board members, and CTT members. The elevator talk should be:
 - prepared as a series of bullet points;
 - circulated to members of the SDJV Board and CTT; and
 - featured on the website.

All staff members, Board members, and CTT members be able to deliver the elevator talk to others when asked, “What is the SDJV?” Additionally, talking points will be provided on specific issues (see below).

- **Talking points about specific issues:** Talking points will support the Management Board, CTT members, and SDJV staff in having a unified voice about key issues. Like the broader elevator talk (see above), talking points should be succinct and easy to remember. Each year, it is recommended that the talking points be created by:
 - identifying key issues associated with sea duck conservation (e.g., harvest management);
 - determining the audiences for these issues, as well as the appropriate messages; and
 - drafting talking points that are easy to remember and adaptable for the message deliverer or situation.

The Management Board could provide valuable feedback on the topics needing talking points. They should be distributed to those who will need to deliver the message.

- **Factsheets:** Factsheets can be created for all of the goals, but they are especially important for

Goal 3 of ensuring information is disseminated and used. A factsheet for goal 3 should:

- clearly describe key sea duck information and why the information is important;
- identify how the information can be used, or what decisions might be informed by this information; and

Additionally, a factsheet that transcends all of the goals and serves as updated general SDJV brochure is recommended. All factsheets should have a moderate amount of text and more photos, call-out boxes, and brief facts. The factsheets can be provided as a supplement to trainings, presentations, or one-on-one communications to ensure that audience members recall skills they are taught for using these resources.

- **Annual report:** This annual report should:
 - highlight sea duck conservation needs, successes of the SDJV partnership, and key research results about sea ducks;
 - provide summary statistics to emphasize the strength of partnership activities and the results of research;
 - showcase example projects where a strong partnership was necessary to get the work done (including quotes from partners in this manner); and
 - provide examples where science has been applied to conservation and management of sea ducks or their habitats.

The annual report can be distributed digitally using Mail Chimp and linked to the website, to track its readership. A designer can develop a template for the annual report that can be populated annually. It should have a similar look and feel to the website and any other SDJV products. Additionally, it can be handed out in hard copy to agency leaders and Management Board members.

- **Committees:** Committees currently exist in both the Management Board and CTT as a means of dividing the workload, and improving efficiency in completing assignments relative to specific issues or tasks. They are also internal communication tools. These committees should continue to meet on a regular basis, as needed, with regular updates provided to the Management Board and CTT so each understands what the other is engaged in, and what progress and recommendations are being made.
- **Teleconferences and web/video conferences:** These conferencing tools can be utilized by committees and working groups to maintain communications. Web and video conferencing tools are becoming increasingly useful for remote collaborations, and these tools are available from the USFWS. The web/video-conferences can be effectively utilized for presentation of important findings and research results to key audiences.
- **Participation in conferences:** Participating in conferences attended by key audiences (e.g., sea duck researchers or industry). It can be particularly valuable to present at these conferences to ensure that information about and issues related to sea ducks are visible to conference attendees. SDJV should also continue to have a strong presence at the International Sea Duck Conference, which is largely attended by researchers, to maintain that positive relationship.
- **Atlas of habitat use:** An “atlas” of sea duck habitat use should be created to collate and display

existing information about sea duck ranges and areas used seasonally and during migration. A further, longer-reaching, priority for the SDJV should be to identify the characteristics of habitats that are most important (and to explain why other habitats are not used as prevalently by sea ducks). Both the basic presence-absence and more specific information are essential to inform decisions about management, conservation, and industrial development, as well as spur future research. The atlas should be available electronically in an easy-to-use format.

Timeline

The development of these tactics and tools will require guidance and coordination by the SDJV Coordinators as well as support from communications professionals. Communications contractors may be hired for web development, graphic design, creation of factsheets, year-end report, and the e-Blast, and evaluation. Partners' communication staff may also be able to support some of the needs. We developed a suggested timeline for implementation of these tools (Table 4) that will be revisited annually in the communications planning process.

Table 4. Suggested implementation timeline, showing effort allocation by Communications/Outreach contractor or staff on each of the tools, in the next 5 years.

	10/14 -9/15	10/15-9/16	10/16-9/17	10/17-9/19
Educational				
Workshops/training			high	high
One-on-one	medium*	medium*	medium*	medium*
Informational				
Website	high	medium	medium	medium
e-blasts	high	medium	low	low
Elevator talk	high	high	high	high
Talking points about specific issues		medium	medium	medium
Factsheets; call-to-action sheet		medium	medium	medium
Annual report		high	medium	medium
Organizational				
Committees and working groups for specific issues	medium*	medium*	medium*	medium*
Web/video conference	low*	low*	low*	low*
Technical				
Participation in conferences	low*	low*	high*	low*
Atlas of habitat use	high	high	medium	low

(*) Implemented "internally" by coordinators, technical team, and management board

Evaluation

Each tactic and tool should also be evaluated to assess its effectiveness, leading to improvement of the tactic and tool and to guide development of new products. The evaluation should include proximate evaluation (e.g., how many audiences reached, how many news articles published, how many web site hits, etc.) as well as ultimate evaluation (e.g., change in attitudes/behavior, increase in knowledge, decrease in bird disturbance in nesting area) measures. Given that ultimate evaluation tends to require more resources, we suggest that proximate evaluation tools be implemented first. Then ultimate evaluation be conducted after a couple years of investing in a communications tool, such as the website, if it is determined that such evaluation is needed.

The objectives table in this plan can guide evaluations with given audiences, and Table 5 below can guide evaluations of key tactics and tools that will address multiple goals.

Table 5. Suggested proximate and ultimate evaluation measures and associated tools for some of the primary communications tools.

Tools	Proximate	Ultimate	Evaluation Tools
Website	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Number of website visitors is maintained or increases each year. - Amount of time website visitors spend at website increases each month. -Number of pages website visitors view increases each month. -Key content webpages have high visitation (in the top 10 pages visited) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 75% website users report finding information they are looking for. - 75% website users believe website to be easy to use. - 75% website users report increased knowledge about the JV and its activities after visiting website. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Google Analytics (proximate) – review twice/year. - Online survey on website (ultimate) – after 2 years of new site.
E-Blast	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - More than 30% (JV average) of e-V recipients open e-blast. - More than 40% of e-blast readers click on 1 article to read in full. - Number of e-blast readers increases each month. - Requests to be added to e-blast distribution list increase. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 75% e-blast readers report finding interesting information and well-written articles. - 25% e-blast readers sign up for other activities listed in the e-blast and report reading about it there. - 75% e-blast readers report increased knowledge about JV and its activities after reading blasts. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - E-blast program tracking function or Google Analytics (proximate) – review after each e-Blast. -Online survey of e-blast email list (ultimate) after 2 years of e-Blast.
Year-End Report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - More than 40% of report distribution list opens report within two weeks of emailing report link. - Staff, Board members, and Technical Committee members each distribute more than 10 reports/year. - 75% of partner organizations respond to solicitation for content in annual report. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 75% report readers report finding information useful to their work. - 75% report readers indicate report is easy to read. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Google Analytics to track who receives and opens email with report, who clicks on link to read it (proximate) – after each report. - Online survey of email distribution list that received report (ultimate) after 2 years of reports.

Elevator Talk	- 75 % Staff, Board members, and Technical Committee members learn the elevator talk and deliver it regularly.	- 75% staff and Board report that those who hear the elevator talk seem interested and ask follow up questions.	- Observation of Staff, Board members, and Technical Committee members (proximate) - ongoing. - Informal focus group of staff and Board members (ultimate) – at meeting after 1 year of elevator talk.
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Rough Estimated Costs

In order to design and deliver the communications tactics and tools described above and conduct necessary evaluations of efforts, the SDJV will need support of communications professionals. Rough estimated costs were developed for FY 2015, 2016, and 2017 communications efforts, including the costs for tactics and tools by year. There are two options for communications capacity: 1) communications contractor or 2) a part-time Communications Specialist staff member (which is not possible for 2015, given SDJV has no outreach and communications staff person currently). With either option it is likely that a web design and graphic designer will be needed in addition on a contract basis. Estimated costs were created for the communications contractors based upon typical costs of skilled professionals that have been hired by other Joint Ventures for similar work.

Table 6. Rough estimated costs (does not commit the SDJV to this schedule or to funding specific products).

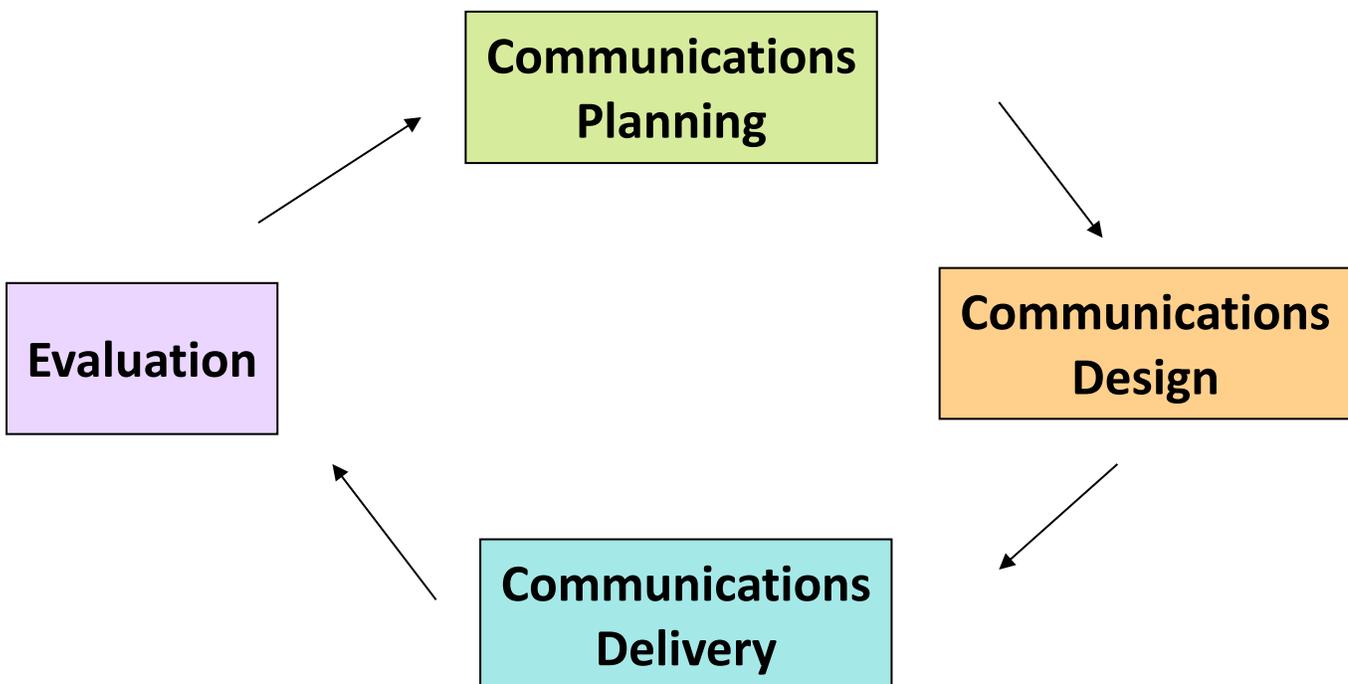
	Communications Contractor Option	Communications Staff Option	Web Designer	Graphic Designer (& Print)	TOTAL
FY 2015					
Website			5000		
EBlast Template & Process	1500				
1st EBlast Issue	1000				
Elevator Talk	500				
TOTAL	3000	Not possible	5000		8000
FY 2016					
Website	4500		500		
EBlast Issues (2)	2000				
Talking points	1500				
Factsheets (2)	6000			4000	
Year end report	4125			2000	
Basic Evaluation of Tools	2250				
TOTAL	18125	1/4 time	500	6000	24625
FY 2017					
Workshops/Training (2)	6000				
Website	4500		1500		
EBlast Issues (3)	3000				
Talking points	1500				
Factsheets (2)	6000			4000	
Year end report	2000			1500	
Atlas of habitat use	6000				
Basic Evaluation of Tools	3750				
TOTAL	32750	1/2 time	1500	5500	39750

Appendix A. Background to Strategic Communications

Communications is a process of idea exchange and imparting information. In effective communications, others understand you and you understand others in return. The audience is defined as the receiver of the message that a source wishes to communicate. Yet, the audience also becomes a source of messages back to the original source. Adapting to the feedback from an audience greatly improves communications efforts.

Strategic communications integrates communication efforts with all of the work of the SDJV. In Strategic Communications, the planning process allows for prioritization of biological (or overall) objectives of the SDJV that should be addressed through communications efforts. Identification of the key audience(s) necessary to address the overall objective of the SDJV then allows for development of the communications goals and objectives. Developing appropriate communications objectives by audience often involves extensive audience assessment in order to fully understand the audience and the most effective means to communicate with them. These communications objectives lay the foundation for the messages of the communications campaign, as well as the tactics and tools, which together compose the communications design phase. The communications delivery involves the implementation of the tactics and tools, through the appropriate channel to the target audience. Evaluation is the monitoring phase for the communications campaign, providing information on results and how the effort might be improved, which adaptively feeds back into communications planning.

Figure 1: Strategic Communications. Adapted from Bogart, Duberstein, & Slobe (2009).



Capacity Building & Approach to Engagement

The strategic communications approach employed for this plan's development emphasized engagement and participation of staff, members and key stakeholders. In line with the SDJV's culture of partner collaboration, the Management Board, staff, and other partners played a critical role in developing the plan. They attended workshops, participated in teleconferences and web-conferences, provided feedback as part of the audience assessment, and reviewed drafts of the communications plan and its components. This "engagement" approach not only ensures a more relevant and useful communications plan, but also helps to build the communications and strategic planning capacity of the SDJV, and the communication skills of board, staff, and partners.

Appendix B. State of SDJV Communications Prior to the Plan

Since its inception, the SDJV has placed an emphasis on the collection of information and science about sea ducks because little was known about these birds. Now, with more information available, the time is right to communicate that information to a greater degree. The need to develop a communications plan was identified in both the 2008 Strategic Plan and 2012 Implementation Plan. The present communications planning effort is the first for the SDJV.

Currently, the primary SDJV communications tools include: a website; a series of sea duck species information factsheets; a section of the annual report *Canadian Habitat Matters*; and sea duck conferences held every three years since 2002 that serve to bring the science and management community together.

The SDJV's website presents the essential pieces of information about the partnership (its goals, strategic plan, implementation plan, science efforts, and contacts). It also offers more extensive information about the sea duck species and sea duck research (including a bibliography of funded and published work). However, much of this information is presented in static pdfs and without compelling or consistent graphic design, limiting its effectiveness. Web design technology and content management systems have advanced greatly in the past few years offering much opportunity for the SDJV in addressing the task in the Implementation Plan which identified the need to "overhaul SDJV web site".

The sea duck information series factsheets are technical documents for each species that include species description, range, habitats, behavior, population size and status, management and protection options and concerns, and relevant references. Several photos are included on each sheet as well as range maps. Keeping the information in these information sheets up to date has been a priority for the SDJV's communications/outreach efforts. The graphic design is basic, and there is limited white space. The intended audience for these factsheets was primarily technical, but there was also a desire for the factsheets to be secondarily appropriate for a lay audience, which is why both general and technical information were included.

An additional communication tool is the *Canadian Habitat Matters* annual report. Information about each of the Canadian and International (CAN-US) Joint Ventures is rolled up into a set of national facts and figures. It is produced yearly, and the SDJV receives 1-2 pages to highlight accomplishments and current activities. This report is well designed and includes interesting facts, images, maps, and graphics, as well as tabular information about financial contributions. The text is focused and tightly written. This report tends to reach primarily Canadian audiences and has only limited distribution at major North American Waterfowl Management Plan-related meetings and conferences.

Aside from the specific audiences for these tools, audiences for SDJV communications efforts are described in planning documents as the waterfowl community, sea duck managers and researchers internationally, agency decision-makers, the Association of Joint Venture Management Boards, and the National Joint Venture Communications, Education, and Outreach Team.

Appendix C. Assessment of Needs for Defining 5-Year Goals

Nominal Group: Opportunities for SDJV Communications

To initiate communications planning, a workshop with Management Board, Continental Technical Team, and staff was hosted in November 2013. The purpose of the workshop was to define communication opportunities, needs, and goals, as well as key audiences.

The nominal process focused on the question of “What are the opportunities for communications for the SDJV?” The opportunities were then ranked by the participants on an individual basis.

Table 7. Number of prioritization points given for opportunities for SDJV Communications efforts

key sites maps for habitat managers, policy-makers	11
attractive, accessible, linked, yet informative website	10
information for key industries	10
involvement and interaction with related groups doing related work	8
feedback to harvest management	6
place for accessible data	4
information to internal agency audiences (administrators, other programs)	4
ways to reach the general public with media	4
links to habitat JVs & LCCs	4
communication to international partners beyond US/Canada	3
contract a communication expert	3
successional planning and recruitment of early career scientist	3
Sea Duck promotion for priority species/surrogate species lists	2
targeted emails/eblast to various user group lists(listservs)	2
outreach to Native people	2
increase advertisements for research opportunities through SDJV	1
information for impact assessments	1
better dissemination of JV past project reports	1
targeted presentations at conferences, meetings, etc.	1
sea duck information to regulators	1
increase public support for conservation funding for sea ducks	1
outreach to hunters	1
periodic webinars offered to interest groups	
peer-reviewed scientific publications	
information for boaters, kayakers, and others using nesting islands	
recruitment of volunteers to contribute information	
opportunities for mitigation and restoration	
ensuring communication between Board and technical community	
education in schools	
outreach to birding community on sea ducks	
appreciation for unique aspects of sea duck ecology	

conduct media interviews	
elevator speech about focus & priorities for JV members	
support for periodic sea duck conference	
support for sea duck book	
maintaining connection with former CTT members	

The three highest prioritized items were “key sites maps for habitat managers, policy-makers”, an “attractive, accessible, linked, yet informative website”, and “targeted information for industry”. The feedback associated with the full list of items were used to inform the subsequent sections of the Communications Plan.

Goals

Through the workshop and subsequent review, a list of goals was created:

- Goal 1. The SDJV contributes to scientific information about sea ducks and their habitats that is readily available and used by stakeholders.
- Goal 2. SDJV partners collaborate on research and monitoring to address gaps in sea duck conservation and management.
- Goal 3. SDJV priority actions are implemented that advance sea duck conservation and management.
- Goal 4. The SDJV is widely recognized as the leading conservation program for sea ducks and has a strong and informed constituency for sea ducks.

Audiences

As the final component of the workshop, participants listed audiences. Audiences were defined as those who positively or negatively influence whether SDJV can achieve a goal. Twelve key audiences were selected for Audience Assessments.

Communications Working Group

At the workshop, a Communications Working Group was identified, involving the two Coordinators, two Management Board Co-Chairs, and two Technical Committee members from the U.S. and Canada. The members included: Brad Bortner, Martin Raillard, Myra Robertson, Don Kraege, Tim Bowman (US Coordinator), and Patricia Edwards (Canadian Coordinator).

Appendix D. Audience Assessments

Following the Needs Assessment workshop, Audience Assessments were conducted for audiences identified as key to the accomplishment of the priority goals. The audiences included: Canadian Wildlife Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, bird habitat Joint Ventures, Landscape Conservation Cooperatives, state fish and wildlife agencies, Subsistence users and Co-management Councils, Flyway Councils, conservation NGOs, U.S. Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM), sea duck researchers, industry, and the SDJV Management Board. The Working Group selected representatives based upon their high level of knowledge and experience with an audience, their familiarity with the Joint Venture, and their likelihood to speak honestly to support the development of the Communications Plan. Consideration was also taken to ensure that interviewees represented Canadian and U.S. audiences as well as the perspectives of the Atlantic and Pacific flyways.

The Audience Assessments were conducted via phone with Dayer. Each audience was asked 14 questions (Table 8). The questions were designed to better understand the audience and their awareness, attitudes, motivations, and behaviors.

Table 8. Audience Assessment interview questions

What is your role with [insert organization or group]?
What are the primary activities of [insert organization or group]?
What does [insert organization or group] value? What else is important to them?
What are their attitudes towards conservation? Birds? SDJV?
Where/how do the interests of [insert organization or group] and SDJV overlap? diverge?
Why would they do X behavior?
What would be barriers to them doing X behavior?
Who does [insert organization or group] influence?
Who influences [insert organization or group]?
Where do they get their information? What sources do they trust?
What information needs related to sea ducks does [insert organization or group] have that the SDJV could meet?
How has SDJV reached out to [insert organization or group] before? Was it/is it successful? Why/why not?
How would it be best for the SDJV to share information and communicate with [insert organization or group] in the future?
Anything else I should note?

Responses helped identify key audiences for each goal, as well as common messages for each of the communications goals.

In summary, six key lessons were learned in the interviews:

- 1) Communications from the SDJV have been most effective with sea duck researchers so consider how to expand on them to strengthen the SDJV partnership and capitalize on the interest of conservation managers and conservationists to improve communications with them;

- 2) Target information and recommendations to shared values, interests, attitudes, and motivations of each audience;
- 3) Two-way communications will be necessary to identify what information is needed and how to deliver it;
- 4) Regular communications with audiences are essential and currently lacking;
- 5) Think of the Management Board, CTT, and staff as communication messengers and prepare them to communicate proactively; and
- 6) Multiple communications tools exist that can emphasize the sea duck conservation problems, conservation needs, research results, and SDJV successes.

More detail related to each of these lessons and additional insights follow.

Researchers most informed about SDJV. The interviews revealed that scientists and technical people tend to be well informed and positive about the SDJV. There is room for improvement through communications with managers, administrators, and conservationists. Interviewees in the latter group provided feedback that they need to hear more about sea ducks if they should be taking action related to them. They also suggested that information about sea ducks be distilled and available so it can help direct actions.

Shared values, interests, attitudes, motivations. The interviewees identified their values and interests that overlapped with those of the SDJV's, including bird and/or habitat conservation; development that is environmentally sound; fostering partnerships; applied science; research on climate change and other potential risks; and healthy populations for harvest. Some of the interviewees felt their interests were totally consistent with those of the SDJV. Others noted several points of divergence, including their habitat emphasis (instead of SDJV's emphasis on species research and monitoring), their relatively weaker emphasis on monitoring, their interest in a broader suite of species, and their more regional scope.

Interviewees were asked to explain their attitudes toward SDJV. Those who have been funded in the past by SDJV to conduct research were very positive about the SDJV. In the same vein, an interviewee commented that SDJV is admired as a JV that has successfully engaged researchers. Others explained that SDJV is "barely on their radar" or they have "benign neglect" of the SDJV because they never hear about it or it is not directly related to their particular job.

Interviewees described their motivations to partner with SDJV in reaching shared goals. Some interviewees acknowledged that they did so largely because SDJV individuals had reached out to them, indicating the utility of proactive communications. Others described benefits they received including research collaboration, receiving or providing information, learning how to minimize their impacts or deal with harvest concerns, funding, and efficiencies from partnerships.

Barriers to partnering with SDJV were related to capacity, including funds, staff, or time. Additionally, administrative barriers included limited travel funds. Communication deficiencies were also noted with interviewees explaining that the SDJV is not visible enough or needs to communicate results more.

Another interviewee explained that he was not convinced that sea duck conservation is really an issue. Others explained that their organizations do not focus on species or that they cannot share data. Trust was also considered to be a barrier between industry and government. The internal barrier of declining participation by SDJV Management Board and CTT members in SDJV meetings and tasks was also described as a barrier.

Information Needs. A variety of science needs were identified including where sea ducks congregate in winter and migration, how to minimize conflicts and impacts of industrial development, identification of species that need to be conserved associated threats, information for stock status and harvest regulations, population status and trends, and how sea ducks are affected by environmental change. One interviewee noted that there is a great deal of information already on the website but many people are not aware of it. Another noted that the information they need must be in a usable format, not dense science.

Awareness of Past Communications. When asked how the SDJV has reached out to the audience they represented, interviewees often struggled to recall. Some interviewees mentioned one-on-one communications with Coordinators, Management Board or CTT. Others mentioned seeing a research presentation or report, the website, or a flyer. Several interviewees mentioned that they had received specific requests to partner on research.

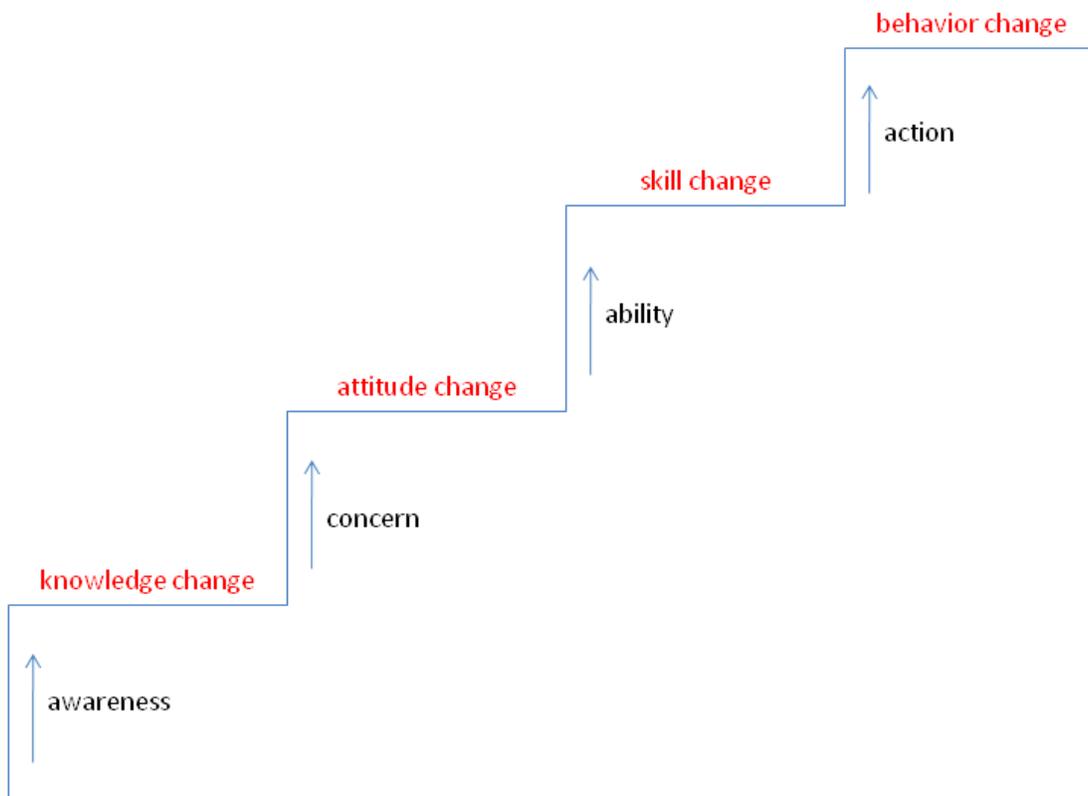
Suggestions for Future Communications. Interviewees explained that they need to know more about what sea duck information exists, what it means, and how it is available for them to access. One interviewee suggested that the SDJV target key individuals in their organization and ask those individuals what they need from the SDJV. Another interviewee suggested that sea duck issues could be brought up during his network's steering committee meetings by SDJV's Management Board members. Similarly, several interviewees suggested that representatives from SDJV participate in their meetings. Another interviewee suggested inviting a representative from new audiences to join the SDJV in an official capacity. Interviewees commonly recommended that communications come from Management Board and CTT members.

Suggested Tools. Communications tools and mechanisms were also recommended by interviewees. Regardless of the tool, several interviewees emphasized the need for more regular communications. Specific tools suggested included: an annual report that is not all science, success stories, an executive summary to go with reports, materials for briefing "upward" to superiors from Management Board or CTT members, a state of the sea ducks report, and presentations. Regular updates were also recommended for the LCCs, other JVs, and Flyway meetings. Regular Management Board teleconferences with interesting, relevant topics (rather than solely administrative topics) would encourage internal engagement. More innovative mechanisms such as an RSS feed from the SDJV site or YouTube videos were also mentioned.

Appendix E. Communications Objectives

A communications objective takes the broad SDJV goals selected for communications and relates them to specific audiences. Ultimately, the main communications objectives are intended to influence behavior in that an audience behaving in a certain way will allow for the accomplishment of the goal. However, it may not be possible to change an audience's behavior before first addressing their knowledge, attitudes, and skills. Education and communications are often thought of as following a staircase of phases as shown in Figure 2, below. First, awareness must be raised (knowledge change), then concern increased (attitude change), then appropriate abilities developed (skill change), for ultimately action (behavior change).

Figure 2. Education and communications – a stair-step process leading to behavior change.



Making objectives measurable. All of these objectives can be measured by providing specific percentages to target for each of the knowledge, attitudes, skills, or behaviors (currently they are listed generically as “increase the percentage of...”). These objectives serve as the foundation for an evaluation following the implementation of the communications campaign to determine whether the objectives have been reached. Audience assessments through surveys or interviews should be conducted to determine the current percentage of the audience group with the given knowledge, attitudes, skills, or behaviors. Then, the appropriate measurable objectives for a communications campaign could be determined. The knowledge, attitudes, skills, and behavioral objectives for groups of audiences for each goal are listed below.

Objectives for messaging. When considering which objectives to focus on for messages, the SDJV should consider where the audience member is on the stairsteps for communications (Figure 2). Should the emphasis be on improving knowledge? Or is the audience already knowledgeable and aware? If so, should the emphasis be on attitudes? Or are they already concerned? If so, should the emphasis be on skills or actions? Communications should consider their level of technical knowledge and how complex to be with the message. Are the audience members primarily scientists, managers, or not members of the conservation community at all?

Table 9. Objectives by audience segments for each of the goals for SDJV communications efforts.

Strongly Influential Audiences	Knowledge Objectives Ensure that XX% of audience (with an emphasis on strongly influential organizations) knows that...	Attitudes Objectives Ensure that XX% of audience (with an emphasis on strongly influential organizations) believe that...	Skills Objectives Ensure that XX% of audience (with an emphasis on strongly influential organizations) is able to...	Behavioral Objectives Ensure that XX% of audience (with an emphasis on strongly influential organizations)...
Goal 1. The SDJV contributes to scientific information about sea ducks and their habitats that is readily available and used by stakeholders.				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sea duck researchers - Bird habitat JVs - LCCs - BOEM 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - For the past 20 years sea duck researchers have been focusing on filling essential knowledge gaps on sea ducks. - The results of their research are provided in reports and papers. - Much of this information has yet to be collated. It exists in a variety of formats and repositories. - Part of the SDJV's role is to facilitate information exchange. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Collating and displaying sea duck information will result in enhanced usability by researchers and decision-makers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide resources (funds, skills, and data) to organize information. - Share information with SDJV. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1.1. Provides resources (funds, skills, and data) to help the SDJV to obtain and organize information. 1.2. Shares information with SDJV as a central repository for information.

Strongly Influential Audiences	Knowledge Objectives Ensure that XX% of audience (with an emphasis on strongly influential organizations) knows that...	Attitudes Objectives Ensure that XX% of audience (with an emphasis on strongly influential organizations) believe that...	Skills Objectives Ensure that XX% of audience (with an emphasis on strongly influential organizations) is able to...	Behavioral Objectives Ensure that XX% of audience (with an emphasis on strongly influential organizations)...
Goal 2. SDJV partners collaborate on research and monitoring to address gaps in sea duck conservation and management.				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sea duck researchers - Bird habitat JVs - LCCs - BOEM - State wildlife agencies - Federal wildlife agencies - Conservation NGOs - Subsistence users & Co-management councils - Flyway Councils 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - While research on sea ducks has increased in the past 20 years, there are still many fundamental information gaps that limit our ability to make essential decisions about sea duck conservation. - The relative importance of limiting factors and potential threats is unknown for most sea duck species. - Despite advances, sea duck species are still the most poorly known group of waterfowl species. - Sea ducks may act as barometers of environmental change. - How the SDJV determines priorities for research and management. - The SDJV's Implementation Plan and Strategic Plan explain research priorities. - The SDJV has resources to contribute to research and management in line with its priorities (e.g., seed funding). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Contributing to filling in these essential knowledge gaps will contribute to sea duck conservation. - Conducting research and filling gaps will facilitate decision-making about sea ducks and help fulfill your mission relative to sea ducks or development or habitat conservation actions/plans. - Partnering on sea duck research and leveraging funding through the SDJV is efficient, and a win-win for our organization and the SDJV. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Find sea duck research priorities on the SDJV website. - Contribute or participate in priority sea duck research. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2.1 Conducts research & monitoring. 2.2 Partners on and/or funds research & monitoring of sea ducks.

Strongly Influential Audiences	Knowledge Objectives Ensure that XX% of audience (with an emphasis on strongly influential organizations) knows that...	Attitudes Objectives Ensure that XX% of audience (with an emphasis on strongly influential organizations) believe that...	Skills Objectives Ensure that XX% of audience (with an emphasis on strongly influential organizations) is able to...	Behavioral Objectives Ensure that XX% of audience (with an emphasis on strongly influential organizations)...
Goal 3. SDJV priority actions are implemented that advance sea duck conservation and management.				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Bird habitat JVs - LCCs - State wildlife agencies - Federal wildlife agencies - Conservation NGOs - Subsistence users & Co-management councils - Flyway Councils - Coastal management agencies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Studies that improve our knowledge of sea ducks facilitate better decision-making. - Sea duck conservation is particularly important because sea ducks reflect the health of the marine environment over broad and local scales. - Some information on sea ducks already exists that can be applied to habitat conservation and harvest management decisions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Considering sea ducks in conservation and management decisions is important. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Find usable information for conservation and management decisions. - Apply information to conservation and management decisions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3.1 Uses information in harvest management. 3.2 Uses information in habitat conservation.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Industry - BOEM - Industry regulators 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - New technologies and energy development could have important consequences for sea ducks. - Applying the existing science information on sea ducks can reduce risks to sea ducks and the overall impacts of development. - Some information on sea ducks already exists that can be applied to habitat conservation. - Four species of sea ducks are federally 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Considering sea ducks in industry decisions is important and demonstrates corporate responsibility. - Considering sea ducks in industry decisions reduces corporate liability. - Work supported by the SDJV is objective and credible 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Find usable information for decisions. - Apply information to decisions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3.3 Uses information in industry decisions.

Strongly Influential Audiences	Knowledge Objectives Ensure that XX% of audience (with an emphasis on strongly influential organizations) knows that...	Attitudes Objectives Ensure that XX% of audience (with an emphasis on strongly influential organizations) believe that...	Skills Objectives Ensure that XX% of audience (with an emphasis on strongly influential organizations) is able to...	Behavioral Objectives Ensure that XX% of audience (with an emphasis on strongly influential organizations)...
	<p>listed as endangered or threatened species/species at risk in the U.S. or Canada.</p> <p>- SDJV promotes objective research and encourages publication of results</p>			

Strongly Influential Audiences	Knowledge Objectives Ensure that XX% of audience (with an emphasis on strongly influential organizations) knows that...	Attitudes Objectives Ensure that XX% of audience (with an emphasis on strongly influential organizations) believe that...	Skills Objectives Ensure that XX% of audience (with an emphasis on strongly influential organizations) is able to...	Behavioral Objectives Ensure that XX% of audience (with an emphasis on strongly influential organizations)...
Goal 4. The SDJV is widely recognized as the leading conservation program for sea ducks and has a strong and informed constituency for sea ducks.				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Management Board - Subsistence users & Co-management councils - Flyway Councils - Bird habitat JVs - LCCs - Federal wildlife agencies - Conservation NGOs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sea ducks comprise a third of all North America waterfowl species. - Sea duck conservation is particularly important because sea ducks reflect the health of the marine environment and the boreal forest over broad and local scales. - While research on sea ducks has increased in the past 20 years, there are still many fundamental information gaps that limit our ability to make essential decisions about sea duck conservation. - Additional research and monitoring is critical to properly manage sea duck species. - Many populations of sea ducks remain below historic levels. In fact, four species of sea ducks are federally listed as endangered or threatened species/species at risk in the U.S. or Canada. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sea ducks are fascinating creatures. - Sea ducks in our area are in need of conservation attention. - In my position, I can positively affect sea duck conservation by elevating awareness of sea ducks and contributing to SDJV. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Articulate the importance of sea duck conservation. - Identify ways they can contribute to sea duck conservation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4.1 Voices support of sea duck science, conservation, and programs. 4.2 Makes funding & policy decisions in support of sea duck science, conservation, and programs.

Appendix F. Desired Characteristics of a JV Matrix for Communications, Education, and Outreach.

Joint Ventures’ competencies are outlined in the “Desired Characteristics Matrix.” A section of that matrix defines the “minimal content” expected of a Joint Venture in their communications, education, and outreach activities, as well as the “comprehensive content” of a highly functioning Joint Venture. During the Discovery Phase of communications planning (in July 2013), we assessed the status of the SDJV communications, education, and outreach efforts (as shown below). The communications plan has been designed to aid the SDJV increasing the areas where it is achieving “comprehensive content.”

Table 10. SDJV’s Status on the Desired Characteristics of a JV Matrix for Communications, Education, and Outreach.

Minimal	Comprehensive	Status
- Mechanisms for communications	- JV Communications Plan	- Working on “minimal”
- Up to date website	- Roles in outreach & products	
- ID audiences & messages	- Appropriate tools including blast, website, tours, press releases, workshops	
- Informal audience assessments	- ID gaps in awareness, attitudes, behaviors and work to change	
- Efficacy of outreach for conservation objectives		

Appendix G. Resources

Bird Education Alliance for Conservation. www.birdedalliance.org

Bogart, R.E., Duberstein, J.N., & Slobe, D.F. (2009). Strategic communications and its critical role in bird habitat conservation: Understanding the social ecological landscape. In Rich, T.D., C. Arizmendi, D. Demarest and C. Thompson [eds.]. *Tundra to Tropics: Connecting Birds, Habitats and People. Proceedings of the 4th International Partners in Flight Conference, 13-16 February 2008*. McAllen, TX. University of Texas-Pan American Press. Edinburg, TX. [online: http://www.pwrc.usgs.gov/pif/pubs/McAllenProc/articles/PIFo9_Education_Communication/Bogart_PIFo9.pdf]

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