

## SE NC Red Fox Symposium

January 20, 2010

### Working Group Notes: Developing a Public Education Campaign

- Who is the audience
  - Full time residents and visitors
  - How do we reach all the people? We have to protect people and wildlife
  - Kids – 3<sup>rd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> graders study animals (in SC) – find out what grade kids in NC study wildlife
- What is the message
  - Respect wild animals and let them be wild without interference, why you shouldn't interfere, understand the results of interfering, i.e. you're responsible for their death if you interact with them this way.
  - Interaction is usually feeding. But also rehabilitating orphaned young. Or picking up young. People don't understand that fox parents leave their young to hunt.
  - If kits are found, say, under a house by children, the kits taken to be tested for rabies, which is fatal to the animal
  - Look at it from animal welfare angle, public health angle.
  - Feeding is intermediary step between all wild animal contact. Feeding feral cats, develop wild tendencies and mingle with wildlife
  - Bigger message than just foxes
  - If you want to help wild life leave them alone
    - Create information based on that ecosystem's issue, i.e. coastal vs. mountains
  - People need a more direct message – showing people that feeding a fox gets that animal killed
  - Should we create education for the entire state? i.e. something general disseminated statewide and then creating information specific to the different regions distributed by the local resource managers
  - What other animals are problem – alligators, Canadian geese, black bears – feeding animals and rabies, incorporate a little bit of fear
    - Rabies is not that lethal because it is so controllable
  - People want to help animals – and that should be where the message is, don't demonize one animal to help another – i.e. feeding foxes kills sea turtles
    - Signs are so limited – can only put so much text on
  - Meeting going on in Wisconsin to develop PSA material on these exact issues- funded and organized by WI dept of natural resources (Laura Simon)
  - Audubon did a great campaign on keeping cats inside to protect song birds and other wildlife (Jean Lynch)
- What is the message delivery method
  - Understand message quickly and clearly (signage) and lead them to a place for them to learn more
  - Many modes of messaging, web sites? How do you direct people to that web site?
    - Reactive resource, not going to search without having a reason to
  - Beach Vitex Task Force – SC group made an 11 minute PSA - with an emphasis on beautiful ecosystems, lovely pictures
    - Video for foxes, or wild animals, talk about diseases – don't want to demonize wild life but want people to be cautious. Make analogies that people understand (i.e. beach vitex is like kudzu)

- Who could put together a video?
- What is the goal? To get people to stop feeding foxes and other wild animals. See how people's actions are detrimental to the environment. Here is what an orphaned fox look like, what does a sick fox look like? Show people when not to intervene.
- Show clips of people feeding animals.
- Cheaper to do a video than creating print media
- Signage at public access ways. Need to research how many signs there are at public access ways, don't want to junk it up. "feeding foxes and raccoons kills sea turtles"
- Beach front lighting for sea turtles – SC creating stickers for light switch covers
  - Put stickers on picnic tables, trash cans about not feeding wildlife
- Some people are not intentionally feeding foxes, feral cats, raccoons, etc.
- Creating curricula for school kids
  - Getting in "Project Wild" curriculum – who to talk to

#### Working Group Synthesis

- Message delivery:
  - Should be positive
  - Concise
  - Something that will grab attention
  - Analogies that the public can understand
  - Written at a 10-year-old's level
  - Relevant to their daily lives, they are assisting in the process, they are part of the solution
  - Work on a solution to solve our problem in coastal regions, don't take on the entire state's wildlife problem
- What is our message:
  - Why does feeding foxes and raccoons harm them? It habituates them to people, they become malnourished and leads to their destruction
  - Don't feed (and then a bullet list of why)
  - Keep wildlife wild
  - A fed fox is a dead fox
  - Leads to the decline of sea turtles and shorebirds, causes resource managers to trap/shoot/kill/destroy them
  - feeding wildlife leads to their destruction
  - if you feed them you are killing them
- What should an education campaign look like
  - Don't want printed materials
  - Standardized signage (branded)
  - Includes a hook message, with some support language – 100 words
  - Direct them to web sites and/or video
  - Education of grade school children, when do they learn about wildlife/environmental education?
    - Curricula
    - Teacher workshops
  - Media – likes the problems that can be easily solved, this might be a something to sell to them – but they still need to be hooked
  - Create a standardized logo – but language can be different

- Logo development – DENR public affairs? University design students?

Working Group Lead – Whitney Jenkins, NC Division of Coastal Management/NC National Estuarine Research Reserve