



Special Ad Council Update Issue – May 2013

Subject Line: Update on Ad Council Water Campaign

Many Member Association leaders are aware of the potential for WEF to work with the Ad Council on a national public awareness campaign. WEF is very excited about this opportunity, and based on the feedback and discussions at the WEFMAX meetings and recent MA meetings, it appears the MAs are supportive and share this enthusiasm. Thank you so much!

Originally we had planned to make a presentation to the Ad Council for their decision in early June. Together with the Ad Council project managers, however, we have extended the schedule until early September for two reasons.

First, WEF is a member of the Value of Water Coalition that began working together on the idea of a national public awareness campaign about water months before the Ad Council invited WEF to make a proposal. Work had already begun with the Coalition on the research phase to identify what the public understood about water issues. That research is near completion, and it makes sense to wait for it before drafting the final proposal.

Second, more discussion is needed on the 'water issue and call to action'. The Value of Water Coalition, a group of six nonprofit water organizations and six private water-related companies, has agreed the number one issue in America is our need to invest in our water infrastructure. However, this issue does not meet the Ad Council's criteria -- which is to determine a major public issue and identify actions an individual citizen can take to correct or improve the situation. There are many water issues that do lend themselves to citizen actions -- such as not using the toilet as a trash can for wipes, pharmaceuticals, etc., not over-fertilizing, picking up pet wastes, etc. But feedback from the Ad Council is that the water sector should choose one issue and begin building the campaign around it -- others can be added over the three years.

This truly is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, and we want to get the message right. Imagine ads on television, radio, billboards, and in magazines that are so thought-provoking people immediately grasp the message, and that message influences their thinking and actions about water for many years to come. And, once they get the message, a direct connection has been made for them to make behavior changes to protect and understand water and to support clean water initiatives.

Landing on a single-minded message that meets the water sector needs and also meets the Ad Council criteria requires more discussion, input and feedback from our water stakeholders. And

while we all desire to move forward expeditiously, we recognize that an extension to the current schedule would allow the completion of the public awareness research and for more water sector interaction and potentially development of a stronger message that could gain support. We will need everyone's help to meet the Ad Council's partner-funding requirements of \$3 Million (\$1 Million per year for three years). On average, each general market Ad Council campaign garners \$25 to \$30 million annually in donated media. This is quite a remarkable return on our investment we believe.

WEF has prepared a revised project schedule that allows for more dialogue on the 'water issue and call to action'. We look forward to working with you very soon to hear your thoughts as we develop the final proposal and begin fundraising for the project. Expect information about the process for receiving input/feedback soon. In the meantime, on behalf of the WEF Board of Trustees, thank you for your enthusiasm for this important and exciting initiative.

Cordell Samuels
President, Water Environment Federation