

Planning Environmental Campaigns

A Briefing Paper prepared for the North Coast Stream Flow Campaign By Felice Pace

There are lots of types of campaigns and they all have both peculiarities and some things in common. We are posting what we consider to be some of the best descriptions and guides to campaign planning on the North Coast Stream Flow Campaign web site. This paper, however, deals narrowly with environmental campaigns and is based largely on my personal experience in planning or helping to plan environmental campaigns.

Participants:

The first step in planning an environmental campaign is to decide who needs to be in the room doing the planning. If the campaign is formulated within an existing organization this is not much of a problem, but even then there are campaigns which fail to secure full “buy-in” by all members of the Board of Directors or all staff members.

In deciding who needs to be in the room it is necessary to have an idea about the campaign’s goals and objectives. Having an idea about the strategies which will be employed is also helpful. This is the case because there may be organizations or even allies working on the same issue which is the focus of the campaign and may share the same goal(s) but which have different objectives (ideas about what constitutes “success”) or have very different strategies for achieving the goal(s).

Including organizations which have radically different ideas about what constitutes success or which have radically different strategies for achieving the same or similar goals and objectives is a recipe for problems. On the other hand not including organizations which are major players in the areas of focus for the campaign can also cause difficulties down the road. In many cases establishing a big-tent process and allowing organizations which don’t agree with the goals, objectives or strategies that the campaign planning effort formulates to self-select out of the campaign is the prudent way to proceed.

In my opinion, personal feelings about those representing other organizations should not determine whether or not an organization is invited to participate in the campaign planning process. Campaigns are not about personal likes and dislikes and an effective campaign planning and governance process can manage personal dislikes or even personal animosities.

The group convening the campaign planning effort should think very carefully about the invite list and try to include all those who have a stake and can make a positive contribution.

Goals and Objectives:

The campaign planning process should result in clearly formulated campaign goals and objectives. It may seem strange but some environmental campaigns fail to do this. While there may be goals and objectives in funding requests – especially to foundations which generally require them – some campaigns fail to go through a formal process whereby member groups formulate and formally endorse clear and specific goals and objectives. This often leads to problems down the line when member organizations and their representatives expect the campaign to pursue the same objectives they are pursuing and their expectations are not met.

Because of the nature of environmental campaigns they typically involve some or all of the following components:

- ◆ Public Information and Education
- ◆ Citizen Involvement
- ◆ Administrative Advocacy
- ◆ Litigation.
- ◆ Legislation

Which of these components are included depends on analysis of what is needed to move the situation (reality) from where it is now to where those planning the campaign think it needs to go. In this regard Power Mapping is a powerful tool. You will find links to Power Mapping descriptions and tools on the web site. We will not be doing a Power Map at the retreat but you might want to try one yourself in preparation.

Power Mapping asks users to answer the following questions:

- ◆ Who has the power to make the change you want, and is most vulnerable to the kinds of pressure you can mount?
- ◆ Who are your allies? Who could be your active supporters?
- ◆ Who will actively oppose you?
- ◆ How can we reach the people in power?

Individuals and organizations which have been working together on the same issues for some time typically will find congruence in how they each answer these questions. However, completing a power analysis together - or comparing analyses done individually - can reveal where views diverge and therefore where more discussion is needed. The power of a deeply shared understanding of what needs to change for a campaign to be successful – a shared power analysis - can hardly be overstated.

Retreat Strategy:

During the coming Planning Retreat, we will be doing elements of power analysis on the first day and brainstorming strategies and tactics for the campaign components - Public Information and Education, Citizen Involvement, Administrative Advocacy, Litigation and Legislation – on the second day. We will also be exploring the capacity of our organizations as related to the campaign, campaign governance and the staffing and resources we need to be successful.

Writing the Campaign Plan:

Facilitators will summarize discussions using flips charts and these summaries will be used to create the first draft of the Campaign Plan. An audio recording will also be made for a second way to check dialog or consensus when formulating the plan. It is hoped that participating organizations will be consulting with their boards and members and making decisions about whether or not they will join the campaign while the first draft is created. The Draft Campaign Plan will subsequently be sent to those opting to participate for review and comment. The intention is to go through as many rounds of drafting, comment and redrafting as are needed to achieve a Campaign Plan with which all member organizations are fully aligned.

It is anticipated that a campaign of this nature will make it feasible to leverage support from larger foundations and foundations which have not been making grants on the North Coast in recent years. Once we have a Campaign Plan it will be turned into applications for funding as directed by the parallel Fundraising Plan. The Campaign Planning team has not defined parameters for the Fundraising Plan. It is a topic in the Next Steps session on day 2 of the retreat. Support from within our own communities might also increase when the Campaign is rolled out and begins the work of reversing the dewatering of North Coast streams.