

# Engaging New Audiences

Activating the Opinion Works Market Research Report



Dr. Jame McCray  
Managing Director Alliance for Watershed Education  
mccrayj@nwf.org  
Schuylkill Action Network Meeting  
5/3/2022

## Support AWE Goals

**Goal #1 - Create a larger and more inclusive constituency of people engaged at and near centers and their waterways as defined by center-level constituency goals.**

**Goal #2 - Increase and enhance constituent attitudes (e.g., self-efficacy, pride, and appreciation), knowledge, and intention to act to ensure a healthy Delaware River watershed.**

**Goal #3 – Collaborate, learn from one another, and deliver high-quality, inclusive watershed education programs that are sensitive to community priorities.**



# Project Objectives

Help member centers better understand surrounding residents.

Develop messages and approaches to help centers engage a more diverse constituency.

Provide support so these findings can be applied.



# Pilot Centers

<u>Pairing</u>	<u>Center</u>
A	Center for Aquatic Sciences NJ Conservation Foundation
B	DEEC TNC-DE
C	John Heinz Cobbs Creek
D	Watershed Institute Tulpehaking
E	Schuylkill Center
F	Berks Nature
G	PEEC



# Methodology

## 1. Project Planning & Demographic Analysis

## 2. Basinwide Survey

- 2756 interviews across the watershed
- Catchment area oversamples
- Feb, Sep 2020

## 3. Focus Groups

- 12 virtual groups reflecting new audiences of interest
- English & Spanish
- Oct-Dec 2020



# High-Level Findings



## Environmental Disconnect

Many people in the new audiences we interviewed do not think of themselves as environmentally motivated, but their values and priorities indicate that they are.

- “Environmentalists” often seen as the “other.”
- Being outdoors makes me feel happier.
- Care about local waterways.
- High priority to address water pollution.



## Feel and Experience

Most new constituents we interviewed are not looking at AWE Centers as a place for environmental education, but rather as an activity center. And they want to *feel and experience* something when they are there. What they want to feel is a connection to wildlife, the water, and nature.

- An activity first and foremost.
- Share it with friends and loved ones.
- Picture myself there. Imagine how it will *feel*.



## A Sense of Welcome

Beyond the typical barriers to spending time in nature – lack of time, health limitations, and inhospitable weather – the new audiences in this study raised a specific and important concerns centered on insensitivity and discrimination in ways large and small.

- Lack of people who look like me.
- Lack of role models and specifiers in the community.
- Gentrification and a sense that opportunities are being kept from me.



## Potential for Stewardship

Water pollution is a serious concern. Many people feel personally impacted by water pollution. But optimism that the waters can be cleaned up is high. It is that combination of threat and optimism that offers potential to engage these new audiences in personal stewardship.

- Water seen as in poor health and not improving.
- Low confidence in tap water, but people working around that.
- Mixed messages, but many want to be engaged
- Despite optimism, people don't know how to engage.



# Broad Recommendations



1. Think like an activity center, not an environmental education center
  - Give the casual visitor or constituent a quick take on the what, where, when & how much.
  - Emphasize the feeling, experiential aspects of the activity.
  - Be visible in the places (calendars of events, gathering places, etc.) people look for information.
  - If the Center has a facility, focus on what goes on there.



1. Focus on People

- These non-traditional audiences want to see images of people interacting with nature.
- They want to see people having fun and know it will be a good experience visiting.
- Group activities are often the most appealing for new audiences.
- Centers' websites need to replicate what they are often doing much better on Facebook.
- Cultivate local influencers and role models in the community.

3. Reflect the diversity of the community

- Ensure that our digital presence reflects the diversity around us and extends a sense of welcome.
- Be mindful of whether we are always putting people of one background in visible leading and teaching roles.
- Challenge ourselves to diversify staff, key volunteers, Board.
- Make a commitment to being bilingual, when there is a substantial Spanish-speaking population.

# Implementation



## Market Research Regrant

- The Camden Community Network Expansion will develop accessible information, communications and calendars for Camden City residents.
- This Bartram's Garden project implements recurring seasonal outreach via direct mail and a renewed partnership with the Southwest Globe Times newspaper. Focuses on reaching roughly 30,000 households who live near—but not immediately adjacent to the center in Southwest Philadelphia.
- The Schuylkill Center is hosting program series that emphasizes restoration and connection among varied cultures and constituencies to create an inclusive platform for audiences. Focuses on participatory activities particularly for communities of color in Philadelphia.



# Discussion

