



Do Diligence Sounding Board Report

To: Interested Parties

From: Eric Eckl, Water Words That Work, LLC

Re: Results of a Review of the "What is Your Water Color?" Commerical

Date: 02/05/2010

Water Words That Work, LLC is preparing to launch a new market research service -- tentatively titled the "Do Diligence Sounding Board" -- for nature protection and pollution control organizations to use to evaluate marketing materials and messages.

The purpose of this forthcoming service is to allow you to quickly and affordably pre-test materials before they are final -- giving you an opportunity to improve your piece before you release it into the wild. **Once the service launches, Water Words That Work, LLC will provide DDSB feedback to our clients in complete confidence.**

As part of our field trials for this service, we tested 10 "social marketing" pieces from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Nonpoint Source Outreach Toolbox (<http://www.epa.gov/nps/toolbox/>). The EPA offers these materials up as examples for others to emulate -- so they are fair game for a public critique by the panel.

This report summarizes what 25 "everyday citizens" have to say about the "What is Your Water Color," produced by the Kentucky Department of Water as part of the "[If it's on the Ground, it's in Your Water](#)" campaign. To watch the video, point your browser to:

http://www.epa.gov/nps/toolbox/tv/KY_ExposedSoil.mpg

By the Numbers

This video scored the lowest of the ten pieces reviewed in the pilot round. The sounding board gave it below average remarks on nearly every criteria.

Statement	1-Strongly Disagree	2-Somewhat Disagree	3-Somewhat Agree	4-Strongly Agree	Average for this Piece	Average for similar pieces
The piece gets my attention	4	3	7	11	3	3.29
The piece has a clear message	2	3	9	11	3.16	3.46

All sounding board answers are verbatim -- including spelling and typographic errors.

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The piece is believable	0	3	10	12	3.36	3.38
The issue is important to society	0	4	5	16	3.48	3.60
It is urgent to address this issue now	1	4	11	9	3.12	3.43
The issue has affected me personally, or people I care about	13	5	2	5	1.96	2.23
I could take this action, if I choose to	1	3	8	13	3.32	3.57
If I take this action, I am confident it would make a difference	2	9	11	3	2.6	3.14
If I take this action, I'm confident others will do their part, too	4	9	12	0	2.32	2.55

One Word Summary

Question Wording: "Pick one word that summarizes your opinion of this piece, for example: "Great," "OK," "Bad," "Inspiring," "Depressing," "Motivating," "Confusing," etc.

- "Depressing"
- "dull"
- "depression"
- "Informative"
- "informative"
- "depressing"
- "Good"
- "educational"
- "Confusing"
- "OK"
- "Quiet"
- "Clear"
- "Motivating"
- "Inspiring"

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- "Confusing"
- "pointless"
- "Disappointing"
- "great"
- "Sad"
- "OK"
- "moving"
- "OK"
- "Discouraging"
- "OK"
- "Alright"

Your Message in Their Words

Question Wording: "Imagine that you are telling a friend, coworker, or family member about this piece. In your own words, how would you summarize the message?"

You predicted they would answer like this:

Once the program launches, clients will attempt to predict the answer the sounding board will provide.

They actually answered like this:

- "That it was about water pollution caused by new housing construction."
- "New housing development causes harmful runoff into the water"
- "A little girl is drawing a picture of a blue stream of water, whose water starts to turn a muddy orange color because of soil erosion. No longer is the water a clear blue".
- "This piece provides information on erosion and water quality".
- "When ground is disturbed during construction, soil is washed away by storm-water runoff and ends up in nearby streams and/or other nearby bodies of water and degrades water quality".
- "New development is harming the natural environment of some communities".
- "Water quality and environmental effects on water supply"
- "I would tell them the video was about what is being put into water."
- "Our water is polluted."
- "Soil erosion caused by construction affects the water quality of our streams and rivers."
- "A girl is painting with watercolors and describes the water pollution that's happened in her backyard. She is sad she can't go in the creek anymore. A voiceover at the end advises viewers on what they can do".
- "Poorly planned construction causes erosion and pollutes local streams".
- "The piece is trying to convey that Kentucky is experiencing erosion problems due to more houses being built."
- "Picture this adorable little girl sitting in her dining room painting a picture with watercolors. In the background, you can hear her thoughts about new construction and its effect on things like the creek she *used to* enjoy playing in. Finally, the camera pans to show her painting of heavy construction equipment and runoff into the creek. She drops her paintbrush in a glass of clear water and as the paint clouds the water, a message asking what color your water is flashes across the screen."

All sounding board answers are verbatim -- including spelling and typographic errors.

- "Construction can cause erosion; erosion is a form of pollution in our streams and rivers"
- "Erosion is a problem causing polluted water. The problem is caused by industrial activity."
- "It was a short video about encouraging erosion control. It showed a young girl painting bulldozers, disturbed earth and a brown stream. Unfortunately, "
- "A little girl talks about what happened near here house. The resulting pollution destroyed the local environment and the water."
- "The message is water pollution"
- "Basically, this spot is about how easily water can get polluted. Even something as harmless as building a house can lead to all kinds of water problems".
- "It's a commercial about erosion and a creek getting polluted by it. The commercial is of a girl painting, and she's talking about how she can't play by her favorite creek anymore because of all the developments around it are causing erosion".
- "When new housing developments are built, a lot of dirt gets moved around and can end up in water supplies, creeks, etc. Causing the water source to be unusable for some purposes."
- "A video with a young girl telling how new houses are being built near her home. The bulldozers have moved a lot of dirt around during the building. There is a creek near the girl's home where adults and children used to play. Now, since the home building, the creek is no longer clean or beautiful. The girl thinks that the bulldozers have pushed dirt into the creek and this is why the water is now so dirty. The children can no longer play near the creek".
- "The video is about erosion in Kentucky. It shows a little girl painting the creek behind her home that has become polluted".
- "Waste products are getting washed away when it rains and polluting are lakes and rivers"

Strengths of the Piece

Question Wording: "In your opinion, what is the strongest or most compelling thing about this piece?"

You predicted they would answer like this:

Once the program launches, clients will attempt to predict the answer the sounding board will provide.

They actually answered like this:

- "That it uses a child to get across an adult concept".
- "the little girl was cute"
- "The most compelling thing about the piece is the calm way the little girl paints her picture, as if she is resigned to the fact that her water will no longer be clean and blue".
- "The most compelling part about this piece is it has the voice of a child that wants to play in the creek".
- "The contrast between the blue water in the glass after the girl puts the paint brush in and the brown color of the stream in the girl's drawing is very effective in getting the point across."

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- "The fact that the child is no longer able to play in the creek; it adds a personal and emotional appeal to the ad".
- "Drawing"
- "The little girl saying she missed playing in the creek because it was too dirty."
- "The most compelling thing about this piece is the little girl telling us that she misses playing in the creek."
- "The visual of the little girl water coloring and explaining what has happened to her creek with the sound of earth moving equipment in the background is very good."
- "The use of a young child describing the problem".
- "The child's drawing. It shows just how much the runoff has affected her daily life."
- "Being able to see the painting she has painted in the end brings it together nicely. If that portion wasn't there, then the audio and video wouldn't match up as well, thus making watching this piece more confusing. I also like how the painting hits an emotional note in me when I watch it."
- "The little girl's painting... it is simplistic in nature but also very intense in message".
- "The logo and slogan at the end (after the girl is done talking and painting)"
- "the idea of polluted water"
- "The imagery of the girl painting with water colors was very effective and thematic".
- "The paint brush in the glass of water shows how clean water can be quickly destroyed".
- "Good use of the young girl. She seems unhappy, which translates to the viewer".
- "That a simple act can lead to something so serious."
- "The part where she's actually painting brown over the blue water is the most moving, in my opinion".
- "The little girl not being able to play in the creek anymore - you feel bad for her".
- "I am concerned that new home building has been allowed to create such a negative impact on existing home sites and the surrounding environment.."
- "That it is a child taking the lead on making a stand for the problem. I liked the part where it asked how clean your water was and showed the paint brush in the clouded paint water glass".
- "The explanation of what happens when you leave hazards behind where the rain can wash it away."

Weaknesses of the Piece

Question Wording: "In your opinion, what is the weakest thing about this piece?"

You predicted they would answer like this:

Once the program launches, clients will attempt to predict the answer the sounding board will provide.

They actually answered like this:

- "Very monotone. Easy to tune out".
- "The way the message was presented"
- "The weakest part is that perhaps some people may not understand that the color of the stream the little girl is painting is turning colors because of soil erosion."
- "There was nothing weak about it."

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- "While the piece calls for taking action, it does not give any suggestions about what to do except to visit a website, and the link to the web site is not shown for very long"
- "The ending..."what is your water color?"
- "End graphic"
- "I think it was the painting of the picture".
- "The weakest thing about this piece is that I could not figure out exactly what the source of pollution is."
- "I don't see any weakness."
- "It was almost impossible to hear her voice without turning up the volume."
- "The water glass at the end. Specifically, the color blue. We associate blue with clean water. When she puts the brush in the glass, the water should look muddy, to reinforce the message. In addition, the girl says "I think I know where all the dirt goes when it rains." It would be more effective if she were to say, "When it rains, I can see where the dirt goes." In other words, make it stronger statement".
- "It's still a little confusing. I had to watch it twice to understand the message it was trying to convey. The most confusing part is where the little girl is explaining why she can't play in the creek. She explains that 1. houses are being built 2. the big machines push the dirt around 3. the rain washes it away. 4. the creek behind the house isn't so clean anymore. At first I thought that this video was trying to tell us that the problem was too much expansion, due to the houses being built. Then I thought that this video was trying to tell us that machines were the problem. Then I realized that this video was trying to tell us that there's an erosion problem, and the houses and machines were just one example of why they had an erosion problem. Then when she says that the creek behind the house isn't so clean anymore, it makes me second guess the message, thinking maybe the video is about environmental cleanliness, not erosion."
- "The little girl's voice sounds too much like she's reading a script... a little more emotion in her voice would cause a greater impact."
- Basically the whole ad. It's not the simplest concept, and I'm not really sure what I'm supposed to do at the end of it. Not build a house? Also, the girl just talking through most of it isn't very attention grabbing. You have no idea what she's painting. Maybe that should be the focus throughout..."
- "the presentation. specifically, being shown a girl drawing a picture and simply thinking about the problem. Also, the lack of any particular action that can be taken by the viewer to solve the problem. Yes, water is being polluted, but what should I do?"
- "It did not address the harm of erosion or its impact on water quality, beyond the cosmetic."
- "No weakness, perfect ad."
- "I think this was a strong piece."
- "the little girl telling the story. Don't believe that she'd say something like that/be thinking like that. Seems hokey. Perhaps the announcer could do all the talking."
- "I think the last part, where she puts her paint brush in water and the water turns blue, the water should turn brown instead."
- "I don't know that there is a major ecological problem here. Of course, the creek will be more dirty while the housing development is being built, but it is not like chemicals, etc. are intentionally being dumped in the water supply. I would assume

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after the housing development is built, the dirt would not keep going into the creek and she would once again be able to play in the creek."

- "There is no indication as to who, or what group, has realized this negative change in the environment. Also, there is little information as to what type of action is being taken to correct, or return, the area to it's previous condition other than this video sponsored by "It's In Your Water.org".
- "It is too lengthy"
- "The piece is very vague in fact its more of an advertisement to get you to visit a website so unless you do that the video would not make much of a difference in how people do things."

Shop Talk vs. Plain English

Question Wording: Imagine that your friends, coworkers, or family member are looking at the piece themselves. If there are any words or phrases that might be difficult for them, please share them below:

You predicted they would answer like this:

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They actually answered like this:

- "None"
- "no difficult words"
- "I really feel that my friends and family will readily and easily understand the gist of the piece. "
- "The language in the piece is very straightforward - no issues with words or phrases".
- "None"
- "No it was easy"
- "no"
- "It is clear and very easy to understand."
- "No phrases or words would be difficult."
- "The language is simple but effective. It can be hard to use short words without talking down to people, but this ad does a great job."
- "I'd probably explain what I stated above in the weakest thing about this piece portion. There aren't any words that need to be explained, as the video does a good job of letting the little girl speak in simple words and terms, being true to the fact that she's a little girl, as well as keeping it easy for others to understand what is being said, other than the issue with trying to figure out what the video is trying to say exactly."
- "none that I know of"
- "Didn't notice any."
- "Erosion "
- "Vocabulary was fine."
- "Well done, maybe slow down the speed of the little girl talking."
- "I think this was easy to understand."
- "none that I can tell."
- "No, all the words in this piece is easy to understand"
- "I don't think there is anything difficult about understanding the movie."

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- "No difficult language or concepts. Video is in plain, easy-to-understand language".
- "It is simple because a child is the main focus of the commercial".
- "No difficulties."

How They Summarize the Issue

Question Wording: The piece touches on a social issue or problem. In your own words, what is this issue?

You predicted they would answer like this:

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They actually answered like this:

- "Water Pollution"
- "water pollution from new development"
- "The piece highlights the issue of soil erosion and how because of man's neglect and greediness, there are now bodies of water which have become polluted with soil and are no longer safe to use".
- "The issue here is erosion and water quality."
- "The issue is that when proper sediment and erosion controls are not in place, stormwater run-off from disturbed ground at construction sites can cause erosion and the soil in the run-off can get into bodies of water and degrade the water quality."
- "Over-development harming the environment"
- "Water quality and enviromental effects on water supply"
- "What kinds of things are being put into the water and changing the color."
- "The issue is that our rivers and streams are no longer clean."
- "The effect soil erosion caused by earth moving operations and construction on water quality of rivers and streams."
- "Water Pollution"
- "Erosion and pollution caused by careless construction."
- "Erosion due to human impact, such as building houses."
- "Soil erosion and need for conservation due to construction and expansion"
- "Erosion caused by home construction is a source of water pollution."
- "Human activity leads to polluted water"
- "Erosion control for water quality preservation"
- "Pollution of water. "
- "River pollution."
- "Erosion and the effect on our water. We should do something to eliminate or at least mitigate the effects of development on our water. "
- "Erosion caused by "developments".
- "Keeping water supplies clean."
- "The environment, including water quality as well as proper land management & use."
- "The issue is erosion and the problems it causes to the environment"
- "People who leave trash behind checmicals and other harmful products are allowing the products to be washed away into lakes and rivers without necessarily really knowing it."

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How This Issues Touches Them Personally

Question Wording: "If this problem has touched you personally or someone you care about, please briefly share how:"

You predicted they would answer like this:

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They actually answered like this:

- "Has not"
- "N/A"
- "This problem has not personally touched me or any friends or family of mine."
- "This problem hasn't affected me or anyone that I know."
- "A creek that I used to go kayaking in was greatly degraded by runoff from a housing development under construction that did not use effective sediment and erosion control practices."
- "N/A"
- "No "
- "n/a"
- "This problem has not affected me personally or anyone I know, but the little girl in the movie helps create more sympathy for this cause."
- "This particular issue has not affected my personally or people I care about."
- "Relatives of mine had to move away because of contaminated water."
- "A new development went in down the road. I live in a semi-rural area with farms and subdivisions. The new subdivision has affected the local drainage, and for a while we had swathes of mud washing across the two-lane road that is our main link to the city. It was slippery to drive on, ugly, and it sent mud into a neighboring soybean field. But the car-washes made a lot of money that year."
- "I lived on this small island in Alaska, called Shishmaref, where erosion is a huge problem. The island is literally getting eaten away every summer. Within a few more years, the island may not even exist any more. Some speculate that it would take only one huge storm to wipe out the entire island. They believe that global warming is the main factor contributing to the higher tides. "
- "none that I know of"
- "Has not touched me personally."
- "it does not"
- "We have significant problems with erosion negatively impacting water quality on the island I live on."
- "I have kids and this girl can not play outside in some areas. It scared me. "
- "I have not been affected by this problem."
- "this problem has not touched me or someone I know personally."
- "I live in a desert, so the land is already barren. "
- "It hasn't."
- "The property parcel adjoining my home under went some construction some years back and the owner was allowed to alter the ground level including water run-off. These severely impacted my property in several negative aspects. All attempts to prevent, or reduce, these changes were ignored. Consequently, my property became much less livable and the market value was greatly impacted and reduced."

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- "This has not affected me personally."
- "It has not been a problem with me."

The Action That is Called for

Question Wording: "The piece urges you to take some action to address the social issue or problem. In your own words, what is this action?"

You predicted they would answer like this:

Once the program launches, clients will attempt to predict the answer the sounding board will provide.

They actually answered like this:

- "Contact an organization"
- "stop developing homes near water"
- "It urges people to be aware of pollutants and chemicals which could be on the ground and consequently seep into your water, so people should be vigilant."
- "The message here is to protect our water supplies instead of destroying them."
- "The piece urges you to get more information on cleaning up streams and rivers by going to a web site to get that information. It does not give any specific action steps, such as contacting your local government officials to ensure that effective sediment and erosion controls are in place at construction sites."
- "To take action against pollution."
- "Be mindful of the environment"
- "To support causes and find out information about how to help with different things being put into our water. "
- "The action is to go to their website for more information."
- "To get more information about cleaning up our rivers and streams, go to the website inyourwater.org."
- "Visit a website and get involved"
- "Go to a website for more information on what to do."
- "Do what you can to stop the human impact when it comes to erosion, even if it means to just speak out on the things that are contributing to the problem."
- "The piece urges viewers to visit www.inyourwater.org for more information on cleaning up water sources."
- "I have no idea. Not build a house? "
- "I have no idea what the action is. I do not think it was made clear in the video".
- "Prevent erosion so that our natural resources are preserved."
- "Go to inyourwater.com"
- "The message is to help clean the water in Kentucky. The message was about dirty water, but it didn't say how to help."
- "think about erosion when you're building or moving dirt in large amounts. think about ways to mitigate the damage."
- "people should think more about erosion, not push good dirt around."
- "To go to a website to learn how you can do more to help keep water supplies clean."
- "The viewer is urged to contact It's In Your Water. org."
- "Keeping the ground clean so it does not flow into our water"

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- "To do your part and stop leaving waste behind and using products that can be washed away and to tell others as well so we can have cleaner water."

About the Do Diligence Sounding Board

Just whose opinions are these, anyway? The "Do Diligence Sounding Board" is a standing body of U.S. residents who provide feedback on marketing materials and perform related tasks in return for payment.

A major corporation recruits the board members, maintains the system for securing their feedback, and handles the financial transactions. Water Words That Work, LLC pays to access to this service, as do other marketing firms.

The feedback that you receive from the sounding board is different from feedback you receive from your peers, for three reasons:

- The sounding board members who review your materials approach them like actual everyday citizen "in the wild." They are not professionals in the field and have not participated in the drafting of the materials.
- The sounding board members have never met you, and will provide their feedback anonymously. Their feedback will not be influenced by their personal relationship with you.
- The sounding board more closely approximates the demographic makeup (especially race and education) of the U.S. "public" than the staff and board of most nature protection and pollution control organizations.

Demographic Trait	Environmental Professionals	Do Diligence Sounding Board	Traditional Telephone Poll, U.S. Sample	Actual U.S. (Census)
4 Year College Degree	95% or higher	~50%	~40%	24%
White/Caucasian	95% or higher	~80%	~80%	79%

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