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**COMMUNICATING CONSERVATION:
PUBLIC RELATIONS PRACTITIONERS' COMMUNICATION EFFORTS TO
INFORM THE PUBLIC OF THE DETRIMENTS OF COASTAL EROSION AND
WETLANDS LOSS**

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
In partial fulfillment of the
Requirements of the degree of
Master of Mass Communication

in

Theanship School of Mass Communication

By
Stephanie Ellene Shaddock
B.A., Louisiana State University, 2008
May 2010

DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my parents, Steve and Cammie, and my brother, Billy. I am grateful for your unconditional love, support, and advice during my time in graduate school and regarding this “book report.” I cannot tell you how lucky I am to have you in my life. Forgive me for the brevity of this dedication- but I think you have had to read enough!

I love you.

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ABSTRACT

Coastal erosion is a serious problem that directly affects Louisiana and indirectly affects the entire United States. Between 1990 and 2000, Louisiana lost 24 square miles of land per year, which equals an approximate football field lost every 38 minutes (Barras, Bourgeois, & Handley, 1994). Hurricanes Katrina and Rita in 2005 accelerated this land loss by transforming 217 square miles of marsh into open water (United States Geological Survey, 2006). As a leader in seafood, oil, and gas production, and shipping state, Louisiana and the nation have much at stake with continued land loss.

To inform Louisiana's citizens and a national audience about coastal erosion, several organizations have formed to create awareness and serve as educational bodies. America's WETLAND Foundation, Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana, and the Governor's Office of Coastal Activities use public relations as a communication tool to spread the message of coastal restoration. By understanding what messages the public relations practitioners disseminate and how, best practices may be found to help future coastal restoration advocates.

This thesis examines these organizations' public relations practitioners' strategies and tactics as well as local and national newspaper coverage. Through in-depth interviews and a content analysis of organizational press releases, the researcher found that the messages focused on government and coastal restoration engineering. Each organization also focused on different attributes determined by the organization's public. The public relations practitioners described media as an important communication channel. The researcher performed a content analysis of news articles about coastal erosion to see if their messages made it into the local and national media. The major themes from the news article content analysis revealed attention to government, hurricanes, and coastal restoration engineering. Though the major themes for the

organizational press releases and the news articles shared similarities, the media did not always use these organizations as sources in its stories. To further spread the coastal restoration messages, practitioners must develop and maintain relationships with organizational publics and news media and establish themselves as the voices of coastal restoration authorities in Louisiana.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Coastal erosion is a serious threat to coastal areas of the United States, especially Louisiana. With diminishing wetlands, wildlife, and natural resources, Louisiana's economy suffers (Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority [CPRA], 2007). If the state of Louisiana does not address the coastal erosion issue, valuable natural resources will be lost and the economy will suffer.

Communication with the public is vital in the fight for coastal and wetlands restoration. Without public relations practitioners bringing the issue to the forefront, the public may not realize the serious implications associated with the loss of Louisiana's lands. One of the primary ways for public relations practitioners to reach the public is through the media. The media, in turn, must be receptive to the public relations practitioners' messages and find them interesting in order to disseminate the message. Reaching the media may present difficulties for public relations practitioners because of changing news values with a shift from public affairs news to entertainment (Hamilton, 2004).

The intention of this thesis is to examine the different public relations strategies and related tactics of governmental and non-profit agencies advocating coastal restoration. In doing so, this thesis intends to create best practices for public relations practitioners.

This thesis examines public relations practitioners' practices in three governmental and non-profit agencies. These organizations are the Governor's Office of Coastal Activities (GOCA), the Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority (CPRA), and the Office of Coastal Protection and Restoration (OCPR); America's WETLAND Foundation (AWF); and Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana (CRCL). In-depth interviews with the public relations practitioners will provide the strategies and tactics use to reach their publics and the media. A tangible public

relations tactic is the dissemination of a press release. By systematically analyzing each organization's press releases, the researcher may gain insight into the public relations practitioners' messages. Examining news articles about the issue of coastal erosion will provide insight into the media's messages and if they are the same or differ from the public relations practitioners.

Coastal Erosion

Lotze et al. (2006) state, "Estuarine and coastal transformation is as old as civilization yet has dramatically accelerated over the past 150 to 300 years" (p. 1806). One reason is human impact (Lotze et al., 2006). Human impact influenced rapid resource depletion due to "rapid human population growth, commercialization of resource use and development of luxury markets, and industrialization and technological progress toward more efficient but also unselective and destructive gears" (Lotze et al., 2006, p. 1807). Along with depleting mammals, birds, and reptiles for food, oil, or luxury items, humans also impacted wetlands (Lotze et al., 2006). Lotze et al. (2006) note, "Over time, 67% of wetlands, 65% of seagrasses, and 47% of other submerged aquatic vegetation were lost because of reclamation, eutrophication, disease, and direct exploitation" (p. 1808). The researchers concede other factors that contribute to wetlands depletion, but note that human impacts cannot be overlooked. Lotze et al. (2006) state, "Overexploitation and habitat destruction have been responsible for the large majority of historical changes, and their reduction should be a major management priority" (Lotze et al., 2006, p. 1809).

Georgiou, FitzGerald, and Stone (2005) discuss other factors affecting Louisiana's coastal wetlands depletion. Louisiana's coastal barrier island chains act as the first line of

defense in the protection of wetlands, inland bays, and mainland regions from storm surges, wind and waves (Georgiou et al., 2005). Georgiou et al. (2005) note:

The morphology and integrity of barrier islands along the Louisiana coast are directly related to the supply of sediment contributed to the coast and the physical processes operating in this region. The same processes that built the barriers are also partly responsible for their erosion, segmentation, and migration onshore. (p. 72)

Georgiou et al. (2005) note other salient factors of coastal erosion such as wave climate, storms, longshore sediment transport, cross-shore sediment dispersal, tides, sea-level rise and subsidence, tidal inlets and tidal prism dynamics, and estuarine circulation. Georgiou et al. (2005) conclude, “Because of the low-lying nature of the lower Louisiana delta plain, coastal processes have a strong influence on erosional and depositional trends and the stability of the barriers, distributaries, marshes, bays, and coastal wetlands” (p. 88).

Players and Laws: A History

Three organizations are important to understanding coastal erosion efforts in Louisiana. These organizations’ missions include overseeing coastal restoration projects, furthering public communication about coastal erosion in Louisiana, and lobbying to ensure coastal erosion is in the minds of Louisiana politicians. These organizations, AWF, CRCL, and GOCA become influential in the coastal restoration communication process.

In Louisiana, coastal restoration efforts have been in effect for twenty years. Efforts began when local grassroots organizations saw the need to do something about the state’s diminishing coast and wetlands. Eventually, because of these grassroots efforts, laws were passed, state agencies were formed, and the Louisiana state government became involved in the process of coastal restoration (See Table 1).

Table 1.

Coastal Erosion History of Organizations and Laws

Coastal Erosion History of Organizations and Laws		
Year	Organization or Act	Definition
1988	Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana	Formed to protect and restore Louisiana's vanishing coastal wetlands
1989	Governor's Office of Coastal Activities	Created after Act 6 passed to conserve, restore, create, and enhance vegetated wetlands
1990	Coastal Wetlands Planning, Protection and Restoration Act	Required assembling a task force of state and federal parties to focus on coastal restoration
2002	America's WETLAND Foundation	Implemented America's WETLAND Campaign to Save Coastal Louisiana
2007	Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority	With the Governor's Office of Coastal Activities, wrote The Master Plan
2009	Office of Coastal Protection and Restoration	Implementation office for the Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority

Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana. According to "Coalition History" (2009), CRCL began in 1988 as scientists, activists, and policy advisors recognized that Louisiana's coast risked depletion. CRCL sought to protect and restore Louisiana's vanishing wetlands. CRCL published *Coastal Louisiana: Here Today and Gone Tomorrow? A Citizens Program for Saving the Mississippi River Delta Region to Protect its Heritage, Economy and Environment* which called for a state office of coastal restoration with ties to the governor, changes in the way the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers (USACE) operated to include coastal restoration, a ban on dredging and proposed the use of new technology in oil and gas exploration, and a new trust fund to finance coastal restoration projects ("Coalition History," 2009). Louisiana voters heard the

CRCL and passed Act 6 in 1989 that sought to conserve, restore, create, and enhance vegetated wetlands in coastal Louisiana (“Coalition History,” 2009).

Governor’s Office of Coastal Activities. GOCA was created in 1989 with Louisiana voters approving Act 6. GOCA’s mission is:

To provide leadership and support to the [Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority] CPRA and to direct and coordinate the development and implementation of policies, plans and programs which encourage multiple uses of the coastal zone and achieve a proper balance between development and conservation, restoration, creation and nourishment of coastal resources. (“About GOCA,” 2009)

GOCA is an office of the Governor and it is responsible for dealing with policy issues relating to coastal restoration and protection. The executive director of the GOCA office is the Senior Advisor to the Governor for Coastal Activities. The role of the head of GOCA is to advise the governor and handle political matters by talking to the legislature, USACE, congressmen, and federal level officials about coastal policies (Macaluso, Personal Interview, October 2, 2009).

The head of GOCA, currently Garret Graves, is statutorily required to be the chairman of the CPRA. The CPRA is an advisory authority of appointees that oversees all coastal activities related to coastal restoration and hurricane protection projects and also gives the chairman the approval or disapproval to enter into contracts using state money with USACE or the local levee districts, parishes, and other federal agencies (Macaluso, Personal Interview, October 2, 2009). The CPRA is an oversight board to make sure the best interests of the coastal communities, environment, economy, and other agencies are being considered when coastal restoration and protection efforts are moving forward (Macaluso, Personal Interview, October 2, 2009).

The Office of Coastal Protection and Restoration (OCPR) is a newly formed office that came from combining the coastal restoration aspects of Louisiana Department of Natural

Resources (DNR) with the hurricane and flood protection aspects of Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development's Public Works (Macaluso, Personal Interview, October 2, 2009). OCPR is the implementation office of the CPRA where the engineers, project managers, and scientists who are working on the various coastal protection and restoration projects and initiatives work to make sure the projects are being built according to contract and in a timely manner and that they finish what they are designed to accomplish (Macaluso, October 2, 2009). OCPR was officially created on July 10, 2009 in the legislative session in Act 523 (HB 833) (Macaluso, Personal Interview, October 2, 2009). For the purposes of this thesis, the offices of GOCA, CPRA, and OCPR are called "GOCA."

Chris Macaluso, Public Information Director of GOCA, is the only staff member performing communication strategies for the office, thus all of GOCA's communication is reactive (Personal Interview, October 2, 2009). Macaluso describes his communication services as media relations, disseminating press releases and maintaining GOCA's website (Personal Interview, October 2, 2009). He notes GOCA is in the process of doing more public outreach and creating brochures to be disseminated throughout the state (Personal Interview, October 2, 2009).

Macaluso also stresses the importance of communication in accomplishing GOCA's mission (Personal Interview, 2009). While pacifying the fears of Louisianans, Macaluso notes that the communication must also convince the rest of the nation that Louisiana is a place that is worthy of aid and monetary aid in the matter of coastal restoration (Personal Interview, October 2, 2009). Another complication to GOCA's communication is the need to perform this communication in a timely manner. Macaluso emphasizes that it is time to convince the public to resolve their differences, agree on a plan, and move forward. Public communication becomes

the driving force in this effort (Personal Interview, October 2, 2009).

America's WETLAND Foundation. Louisiana and the America's WETLAND Foundation (AWF) began the America's WETLAND Campaign to Save Coastal Louisiana (AWC) in August 2002 (History, 2010). The campaign sought to raise public awareness of the impact Louisiana's wetland loss has on the local, state, national, and international level. The campaign is the largest, most comprehensive public education initiative in history that established the values and significance of Louisiana's ecological region (History, 2010).

The Marmillion + Company performs communication for AWF. Todd Ragusa, Marmillion + Company account supervisor, describes the organization's communication as promotional. AWC seeks to make coastal erosion and subsequent restoration an issue in the eyes of local, state, national, and international publics (Ragusa, Personal Interview, October 9, 2009). Ragusa describes communication with the public as a comprehensive communication strategy through branding and various promotional tactics, such as events, conferences, partnerships, editorials, and paid media (Personal Interview, October 9, 2009).

Like Macaluso, Ragusa note that public relations efforts and communication is essential in achieving the goal of raising public awareness and reaching out to different publics about the importance of saving Louisiana's coast (Ragusa, Personal Interview, October 9, 2009). Conversely from Macaluso's communication strategy, AWF seeks to do more than just communicate with local publics about the issues facing Louisiana. AWF hopes to partner with the Netherlands and other river delta communities worldwide to bring the issue of coastal erosion into the public's eye (Ragusa, Personal Interview, October 9, 2009).

Coastal Wetlands Planning, Protection and Restoration Act. Senator John Breaux became involved with The Coastal Wetlands Planning, Protection and Restoration Act

(CWPPRA) also known as the “Breaux Act.” CWPPRA passed in 1990. The law, H.R.5390, required setting up a task force to deal with coastal restoration. The task force is made up of the State of Louisiana, represented by the Governor’s Office of Coastal Activities (GOCA) and five federal agencies including the USACE, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) of the U.S. Department of the Interior, the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), and the and the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) of the U.S. Department of Commerce (USDC).

According to the law, the Secretary of the Army is assigned to convene the task force and:

Prepare a list of coastal wetlands restoration projects in Louisiana to provide for the long-term conservation of such wetlands and dependent fish and wildlife populations in order of priority based on the cost-effectiveness of such projects in creating, restoring, or protecting wetlands, taking into account the quality of such wetlands. (H.R.5390)

The task force must also prepare a plan to “identify priority coastal restoration projects,” submit the plan to Congress, and perform triennial evaluations of the projects’ effectiveness (H.R.5390).

The Secretary of the Army, Director of the FWS, the Administrator of the EPA with the Governor of Louisiana must enter into an agreement to:

(1) set forth a process by which the State of Louisiana agrees to develop and implement a coastal wetlands conservation plan; (2) designate a State agency to develop the plan; (3) submit the plan to the Secretary, the Director, and the Administrator for approval. (H.R.5390)

The Administrator must make grants to assist the agency in plan development, with assistance limited to 75 percent of the cost to develop the plan. The Secretary, the Director, and the Administrator are required to provide technical assistance to Louisiana for the plan. This plan’s goal is “no net loss of wetlands as a result of development activities” (H.R.5390). The Secretary, the Director and the Administrator should report biennially to Congress about this plan.

Master Plan. The CPRA, in partnership with GOCA, the Louisiana Department of Natural Resources (DNR), and the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development (DOTD), wrote a plan to deal with coastal erosion and coastal management for the state. *Integrated ecosystem restoration and hurricane protection: Louisiana's comprehensive master plan for a sustainable coast* (The Master Plan) outlines the CPRA's plan and pays special attention to recent hurricanes. Hurricanes Katrina and Rita in 2005 intensified the erosion on Louisiana's wetlands. Reportedly, "the storms converted approximately 217 square miles of marsh into water. Of this total, 98 square miles of land were lost in southwestern Louisiana, and 119 square miles were lost in southeastern Louisiana" (CPRA, 2007, p. 7). Additionally, the CPRA (2007) plan examined a U.S. Geological Survey report by Barras et al.'s (2003) and notes:

Between 1932 and 2000, coastal Louisiana lost over 1,875 square miles of land, and scientists estimate that the state will lose an additional 513 square miles by 2050. Approximately 24 square miles of Louisiana land turn into open water each year, enough to endanger human communities and essential habitat. (p. 12)

The Master Plan notes the need for public communication and action. The plan seeks to engage its stakeholders and publics. "Dialogue among scientists, engineers, planners, and the public also helps ensure that everyone clearly understands the options which are technically feasible" (CPRA, 2007, p. 103). Additionally, the plan calls for a statewide education and outreach campaign with the goal of informing citizens about ways they can reduce their flood insurance premiums as a way to remove institutional constraints that may affect the implementation of the plan (CPRA, 2007, p. 104). One way to get publics involved might be to show the effects that coastal erosion will have on the state.

Coastal Erosion Implications and Relevant Media Stories

As previously mentioned, coastal erosion implications are far reaching in Louisiana (CPRA, 2007). Public relations practitioners should attempt to frame these implications in a way

that will have an impact on various publics. Coastal erosion and wetland topics such as hurricanes, economic effects on Louisiana and the nation, the oil and gas industry, ports and shipping, fisheries, and wildlife and endangered species could easily become relevant media stories.

Hurricanes. Hurricanes diminish wetlands. It is important that these wetlands are protected because they protect the South. These wetlands and barrier islands protect Louisiana and the other Gulf Coast states by absorbing storm surges that occur after hurricanes. “Scientists estimate that approximately 2.7 miles of wetlands is capable of absorbing one foot of storm surge. As the barrier islands and wetlands erode, south Louisiana communities will be exposed to the direct brunt of storms and hurricanes” (“Storm Protection,” 2009). If this continues, south Louisiana will be subject to frequent and severe flooding.

Hurricane Katrina, posed to make landfall as a Category 5 hurricane with sustainable winds up to 175 mph, lost intensity and made landfall as a Category 3 hurricane on August 29, 2005. Katrina made landfall in Buras, LA located in southern Plaquemines Parish. Initial reports speculated that Hurricane Katrina could cost the Gulf Coast states as much as \$125 billion dollars worth of damage. New Orleans sustained the majority of the damage after the levees broke and resulted in flooding of most of the city from Lake Pontchartrain. Eighty percent of New Orleans was underwater, completely surpassing the 15-foot benchmark set by Hurricane Betsy in 1965. Katrina also devastated the Mississippi and Alabama coasts. New Orleans residents who did not evacuate the city took shelter in the Superdome and the Morial Convention Center. Louisiana casualties directly associated with Hurricane Katrina are estimated at 1,300 lives with around 300 indirectly associated deaths. As a result, Hurricane Katrina ranks as one of the top five deadliest hurricanes in United States history (Knabb, Rhome,

& Brown, 2005). Hurricane Katrina received extensive news coverage, especially surrounding the events in New Orleans. The media, however, missed the mark on one important issue affecting Southeast Louisiana, as well as the state: coastal erosion (Marmillion, 2006).

Economic Effects. The Louisiana Department of Natural Resources investigated the economic impact of coastal erosion (Richardson & Scott, 2004). Richardson and Scott (2004) predict:

This loss of acres along the Louisiana coast makes the state and its industries vulnerable to a new round of natural events such as flooding, hurricanes, and other such acts of nature. A major event such as a hurricane or high waters or a storm could cause damage in a variety of locations in and around the coast of Louisiana. (p. 63)

In addition, the report notes that coastal erosion will have serious impact on four of Louisiana's industries, such as oil and natural gas production, transportation and navigation, commercial fishing, and recreational activities. The long-term effect of coastal erosion will impact the U.S. and Louisiana's economies as seen in Table 2 (Richardson & Scott, 2004, p. 64).

Table 2.

Aggregation of Economic Impact on US Economy and Louisiana Due to Coastal Erosion in Louisiana

Aggregation of Economic Impact on US Economy and Louisiana Due to Coastal Erosion in Louisiana (Long Term Impact)*			
	Lost Sales (Millions)	Lost Earnings (Millions)	Lost Employment
Continental US	\$8,4684.6	\$2,418.7	74,921
Louisiana	\$941.4	\$291.3	14,377

*Scenario includes five-week disruption in oil; 3-week disruption of natural gas; a fourteen-day closure of the ports along the Mississippi; the extra cost of navigation along the GIWW; the gradual reduction in commercial fishing; and, the gradual reduction in recreational activity (20 percent leakage for Louisiana).

(Richardson & Scott, 2004, p. 64)

With coastal erosion affecting pocketbooks and the future of the state of Louisiana, the state and national public needs to be aware of the serious consequences.

Oil and Gas. Additionally, the plan notes the implications to Louisianans and the nation if coastal erosion is not prevented. Disruption of the crude oil and gas will result in price increases and may destabilize the economy (CPRA, 2007). The Louisiana Department of Natural Resources (DNR) researchers Sprehe, Delmar, and French (2006) state:

Together with the facilities in the rest of the state, nearly 34% of the nation's natural gas supply, and over 30% of the nation's crude oil supply, moves through the state of Louisiana and is connected to nearly 50% of U. S. refining capacity. (p. 1)

Louisiana's ranking in energy statistics compared to the nation are astounding. Louisiana ranks first in crude oil and second in natural gas and total energy in primary energy production including the outer continental shelf (Sprehe et al., 2006, p. v). Louisiana also ranks second in refining capacity and in primary petrochemical production (Sprehe et al., 2006, p. v). Where Louisiana produces much energy, the state also consumes it (Sprehe et al., 2006). The state ranks second in per capita energy consumption, third in industrial energy and natural gas consumption, fifth in petroleum consumption, seventh in total energy consumption, and twenty-second in residential energy consumption (Sprehe et al., 2006, p. v).

Ports and Shipping. Shipping will be similarly adversely affected because as wetlands disappear, five of the busiest ports in the United States face the full strength of storms. Louisiana has five ports ranked in the top fifteen by total tons with the Port of South Louisiana ranking first, followed by New Orleans at fifth, Baton Rouge at tenth, Port of Plaquemines at eleventh, and Lake Charles at twelfth (United States Army Corps of Engineers [USACE], 2003, Table 5-2). These ports handle “approximately 469 million tons of waterborne cargo each year” and “represents 19% of annual U.S. waterborne commerce” (CPRA, 2007, p. 8; USACE, 2003).

Fisheries. The USDC through National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association (NOAA), NOAA Fisheries and the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) researched habitat connections with fisheries and how it would potentially affect economies. Stedman and Hanson (1997) note Louisiana ranks second only to Alaska in total pounds of commercial fish and shellfish landed, which accounts for approximately 20 percent of the commercial landings nationally. Recreational fisheries also impact the state's economy (Stedman & Hanson, 1997).

Louisiana's commercial fishing industry is a vital part of the state's economy. "In Louisiana, commercial fishing generated \$2.1 billion in sales, \$1.1 billion in income, and supported 46,000 jobs" (USDC, 2006, p. 114). Louisiana had the highest average landings revenue with \$307 million nominally and \$327 million in real terms. Louisiana accounted for 36 percent of the Gulf of Mexico region's shrimp revenue. Additionally, "Louisiana's contribution to menhaden landings is the highest in the region averaging 83% of annual menhaden landings, despite a 43% drop in Louisiana's menhaden landings between 1997 and 2006" (USDC, 2006, p. 115). The economic impact on the commercial fishery is listed in Table 3.

Table 3.

2006 Economic Impacts of Louisiana's Commercial Fishing Industry

2006 Economic Impacts of Louisiana's Commercial Fishing Industry (Thousands of Dollars)			
	Sales Impacts	Income Impacts	Employment Impacts
Total Impacts	2,096,648	1,090,349	46,389
Commercial Harvesters	298,894	124,403	6,351
Seafood Processors and Dealers	288,758	91,435	3,002
Seafood Wholesalers and Distributors	142,859	70,867	1,399
Retail Sectors	1,368,137	803,644	35,636

(Source: USDC, Fisheries Economics of the U.S., 2006: Gulf of Mexico Region: Louisiana Tables)

With 98 percent of commercial fishery landings being estuarine-dependent, or depending on estuaries for reproduction, nursery areas, food production, or migration, it is important for wetlands preservation (Stedman & Hanson, 1997). The researchers note:

The relationship between a fishery and wetlands has been very effectively demonstrated for the shrimp fishery. Research has shown that the productivity of shrimp fisheries is directly related to the amount of vegetated area in an estuary. In other words, more wetlands will produce more shrimp. Unfortunately, the converse is also true... (Stedman & Hanson, 1997)

A loss of wetlands in Louisiana affects Louisiana fisheries as well as the other Gulf of Mexico states including Texas, Mississippi, Alabama, and Florida (Stedman & Hanson, 1997).

Recreational fishing is also popular in Louisiana. Louisiana ranked third in the Gulf of Mexico region when looking at fishing private boat trips with \$260 million. Additionally, Louisiana sustained 27,000 recreational fishing jobs.

Table 4.

2006 Economic Impacts of Louisiana Recreational Fishing Expenditures

2006 Economic Impacts of Louisiana Recreational Fishing Expenditures (Thousands of Dollars)			
Impact Category	Jobs	Total Sales	Value Added
Trip Impacts by Fishing Mode:			
Private Boat Mode Trip Impacts	2,444	259,334	127,820
Shore Mode Trip Impacts	644	61,757	31,175
Party/Charter Mode Trip Impacts	822	78,151	44,374
Total Durable Equipment Impacts	22,702	1,982,242	995,965
Total State Trip and Durable Equipment	26,612	2,382,034	1,199,333
Economic Impacts			

(Source: USDC, Fisheries Economics of the U.S., 2006: Gulf of Mexico Region: Louisiana Tables)

Spotted seatrout is the most caught key species in the Gulf Region with 36 million fish caught in 2006. “Louisiana accounted for 66% of the region’s catch of spotted seatrout with 24

million fish” (USDC, 2006, p. 116).

Wildlife. Wetlands are home to many different species. Seventy-nine threatened or endangered species of plants and animals occur in wetlands in the United States (“Education,” 2009). Louisiana is home to seventeen endangered or threatened species including the bald eagle, Louisiana black bear, and some species of sea turtles (CPRA, 2007, p. 10; USACE, 2004).

Migratory waterfowl also travel to Louisiana. Around 15 million birds occupy Louisiana’s coastal wetlands and shoreline each year. In winter months, 20 percent, or four to six million, of the continental population of ducks inhabit Louisiana. Additionally, over 400,000 geese spend winter in Louisiana (“Education,” 2009).

Culture. Coastal Louisiana is home to 2 million residents, more than 47% of the state’s total residents (U.S. Census Bureau, 2007). The culture of these coastal residents will be lost if they are forced to relocate. For example, the Native American community of the Biloxi-Chitimacha-Choctaw Indians of Isle de Jean Charles is among the residents in this coastal area in Terrebonne Parish (Simon, 2008). After hurricanes battered the coast and the coastal erosion the area faces, Chief Albert Naquin is ready to move his community elsewhere (Simon, 2008). The island, once four miles wide, is now only a quarter of a mile and the USACE decided it would be too expensive to build a levee around the island, essentially dooming the island and its residents (Simon, 2008). Without coastal restoration and hurricane protection, the island community and its culture will not survive.

Summary

This thesis examines three organizations public relations strategies and the tactics they use to achieve these strategies through in-depth interviews with the organization’s public relations practitioner or highest-ranking communicator. By interviewing public relations practitioners at

GOCA, AWF, and CRCL and understanding the organizations' public relations strategies and tactics, the researcher will establish a best practices approach for coastal restoration public relations practitioners. It is important for public relations practitioners to measure the effectiveness of their communication efforts in ensuring the public receives necessary information about a relevant topic. By examining organizational press releases, a tangible public relations tactic, and subsequent media coverage, this thesis will determine what aspects of coastal erosion, as released by agencies, are considered newsworthy. In doing so, public relations practitioners may gain a better understanding of what the media reports and tailor their messages to meet these criteria.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Examining public relations theories, public relations practices today, and factors that drive the news media become important in determining best practices. The coastal restoration public relations practitioners' strategies and tactics should follow these accepted public relations theories to ensure the communication reaches the target audience.

Public Relations Theories

Dr. James E. Grunig developed many theories found in public relations literature. Grunig developed the situational theory in 1968 in his dissertation, which actually applied to economics and decision-making choices. Grunig wanted to know why and what types of people sought information in a decision-making setting. Later, Grunig (2006) applied the theory to public relations:

Eventually, I realized that the situational theory provides a tool to segment stakeholders into publics, to isolate the strategic publics with whom it is most important for organizations to develop relationships to be effective, and to plan different strategies for communicating with publics whose communication behavior ranged from active to passive. (p. 155)

Grunig realized that by understanding an organization's public, public relations practitioners could foster mutually beneficial relationships.

Four Models of Public Relations. To aid in the understanding the diversity of public relations practices, Grunig developed four models of public relations. These include press agency/publicity, public-information model, two-way asymmetrical model, and two-way symmetrical model (Grunig & Hunt, 1984).

The press agency/publicity and public-information models provide only one-way communication from the organization to the public (Grunig & Hunt, 1984). The press agency/publicity model promotes the organization, but practitioners may do this by

disseminating half-true information. In this way, “public relations serves a propaganda function in the press agent/publicity model” (Grunig & Hunt, 1984, p. 21). The public-information model serves to disseminate information but not necessarily persuasive information (Grunig & Hunt, 1984).

In the two-way asymmetric and two-way symmetrical models, communication flows between the organizations and publics. There are significant differences between the two models. The two-way asymmetric model works “to persuade publics to accept the organization’s point of view and to behave in a way that supports the organization” (Grunig & Hunt, 1984, p. 22). Grunig and Hunt (1984) note two-way asymmetrical relationships “are imbalanced in favor of the organization” (p. 23). In contrast, the two-way symmetrical model operates more as dialogue. “If persuasion occurs, the public should be just as likely to persuade the organization’s management to change attitudes or behavior as the organization is likely to change the publics’ attitudes or behavior” (Grunig & Hunt, 1984, p. 23).

The International Association of Business Communicators (IABC) Research Foundation awarded Grunig a grant to conduct research on the effectiveness of public relations and communication in businesses. Grunig’s Excellence study found “correlational evidence that public relations departments that set objectives and measure outcomes of their short-term communications programs also believe that they experience greater success in building long-term relationships with publics” (Hon & Grunig, 1999, p. 10).

Public Relations Practices

Today, public relations practices seek to establish and build organizational relationships with its different publics. Several public relations practices are relevant to this thesis and the way the public relations practitioners design strategies and implement tactics. These practices

include acting as a manager of communication, strategic planning, identifying and implementing relevant public relations strategies and tactics, and performing environmental scanning.

Communication Manager vs. Technician. Dozier (1984) describes two major public relations roles as the communication manager role and the communication technician role. Dozier (1984) describes the communication manager as “the organization’s expert of solving public relations problems” (p. 16). Additionally, the manager makes policy decisions and implements systematic public relations planning (Dozier, 1984, p. 17). Dozier (1984) describes the technician’s role as “immersed in production of brochures, pamphlets, photographs and graphics... writes news releases and handles technical aspects of producing PR materials” (p. 17). Smith (2005) also notes the differences between communication managers and technicians. Smith (2005) explains communication managers are organizational decision makers, whereas “...communication technicians are specialists in public relations and marketing communication...[and] typically perform entry-level jobs or specialized tasks, often directed by others” (p. 1). Smith (2005) notes in today’s workplace, public relations practitioners serve as both the technician and manager, but recently, more emphasis has been placed on the manager.

Strategic Public Relations Communication. Public relations practitioners today must do more than provide media relations for their organization. Grunig, Dozier, Ehling, Grunig, Repper, and White (1992) discuss the importance of public relations strategic planning. Grunig et al. (1992) state, “Strategic management of public relations is the key characteristic of excellent public relations at the micro- or programmatic level of public relations” (p. 118).

Grunig et al. (1992) offer a model of strategic management that includes the determination of the organization’s mission, development of a company’s profile, assessment of the external environment, an interactive opportunity analysis, identification of desired options,

long-term objectives and strategies needed to achieve the objectives, development of short-term strategies, implementation, and evaluation process (p. 118-119).

Smith (2005) also offers a model of strategic public relations. This model includes formative research, strategy, tactics, and evaluative research (Smith, 2005, p. 10). For this research, strategy and tactics are essential parts of the public relations practitioners' jobs. Smith (2005) describes strategy as "the heart of planning: making decision dealing with the expected impact of the communication as well as the nature of the communication itself" (p. 12). Strategy includes establishing goals and objectives, formulating action and response strategies, and using effective communication (Smith, 2005, p. 12). Smith (2005) describes tactics as "various communication tools...and the visible elements of the communication plan" (p. 12). Tactics include face-to-face communication, controlled and uncontrolled media, and advertising and promotional media (Smith, 2005, p. 12).

Public Relations Strategies. Wilcox, Ault, Agee, and Cameron (2000) describe strategies as part of the public relations process. Wilcox et al. (2000) note that a strategy provides guidelines and a key message for public relations practitioners. Wilcox et al. (2000) state, "One general strategy may be outlined, or a program may have several strategies, depending on the objectives and the designated audiences" (p. 150). The strategy should also reinforce key messages throughout the public relations campaign on all publicity materials (Wilcox et al., 2000).

Wilcox et al. (2000) discuss several public relations strategies such as persuasion, media relations, community relations, employee relations, governmental relations, and international relations (See Table 5). With the exception of persuasion, these strategies seek to establish and

maintain mutually beneficial relationships with its different publics (Wilcox et al., 2000).

Grunig et al. (1992) discuss the differences between stakeholders and publics:

Often the terms *stakeholder* and *public* are used synonymously. There is a subtle difference, however, that helps to understand strategic planning of public relations. People are stakeholders because they are in a category affected by decisions of an organization or if their decisions affect the organization. Many people in a category of stakeholders- such as employees or residents of a community- are passive. The stakeholders who are or become aware and active can be described as publics. (p. 125)

Table 5.

Public Relations Strategies

Public Relations Strategies	
Strategy	Definition
Persuasion	Strategy that seeks to change or neutralize hostile opinions, crystallize latent opinions and positive attitudes, and conserve favorable opinions by knowing about audience, having source credibility, appeals to self-interest, clear message, appropriate time and context, audience participation, suggestions of action, appropriate content and structure of messages, and persuasive speaking.
Media relations	Strategy that seeks to build relationships with printed, spoken and visual, and online media in an effort to disseminate pertinent messages.
Community relations	Strategy that seeks to build relationships with the community and develop a dialogue to listen and monitor emerging issues.
Employee relations	Strategy that seeks to build relationships, better communication channels, and creates loyal employees within an organization.
Governmental relations	Strategy that seeks to build relationships with governmental bodies at the local, state, and federal level by gathering information and creating dialogue between the organization and the government for mutual benefit.
International relations	Strategy that seeks to establish mutually beneficial relationships with the publics of other nations.

(Table 5 continued)

Public Relations Strategies	
Strategy	Definition
*Stakeholder engagement	Strategic public relations practice involving segmenting publics from stakeholder categories and resolving issues created by the interaction of an organization and its publics through symmetrical communication.

Note: Information cited from Wilcox et al. (2000). *Information cited from Grunig et al. (1992).

Smith (2005) offers the differences between proactive and reactive strategies. Smith (2005) states, “Proactive strategies are those approaches that enable an organization to launch a communication program under the conditions and according to the timeline that seem to best fit the organization’s interests” (p. 82). These strategies can be the most effective because they are implemented with the plan and not a forced necessity from outside pressures (Smith, 2005, p. 82). Smith (2005) breaks these strategies down into active strategies and communication strategies. These active strategies include audience participation and special events, development of alliances and coalitions, and sponsorships (Smith, 2005, p. 82). Important to this research are the communication strategies. Communication strategies include publicity, newsworthy information, and transparent communication (Smith, 2005, p. 94).

Smith (2005) describes organizations using reactive public relations strategies when an organization must deal with accusations or other criticisms. Reactive communication includes crisis communication strategies. Smith (2005) offers reactive communication as pre-emptive action strategy of prebuttal; offensive response strategies, such as attack, embarrassment, shock, and threat; defense response strategies, such as denial, excuse, justification; vocal commiseration strategies, such as concern, condolence, regret, and apology; rectifying behavior strategies of

investigation, corrective action, restitution, and repentance; strategic inaction, such as silence; diversionary response strategies, such as concession, ingratiation, disassociation, and relabeling.

Public Relations Tactics. Wilcox et al. (2009) define tactics as:

The ‘nuts and bolts’ part of the plan that describes, in sequence, the specific activities that put the strategies into operation and help to achieve the stated message. Tactics involves using the tools of communication to reach primary and secondary audiences with key messages. (p. 151)

Smith (2005) describes communication tactics as visible elements. Smith (2005) states, “They are what people see and do- Web sties and news releases, tours and billboards, and so much more” (p. 157). Smith (2005) also notes that tactics can be expensive and planning and coordination becomes important (See Table 6).

Table 6.

Public Relations Tactics

Public Relations Tactics			
Electronic Tactics	Written Tactics	Spoken Tactics	Visual Tactics
Email distributions	News releases	Face-to-face discussion	Television
Websites	Factsheets	Speeches	Video news releases
Electronic bulletin boards	Media advisories	News conferences	Infomercials
Listserves	Pitch letters	Press party	News appearances
Facsimile transmissions	Press kits	Press Tour	Motion pictures
Satellite transmissions	Newsletters	Interviews	Home videos
Teleconferencing	Company magazines	Meetings	Slide shows
Video and audio news release distributions	Brochures	Audio news releases	Sponsored films and videos
Cellular phones	Handbooks	Word of mouth	Overhead transparencies
CD-ROM or DVDs	Annual reports		Still photography

(Table 6 continued)

Public Relations Tactics			
Electronic Tactics	Written Tactics	Spoken Tactics	Visual Tactics
	Corporate advertising		Comic books
			Outdoor displays

Note: Information cited from Wilcox et al. (2000).

It is important to note that these tactics overlap. For example, television could be considered an electronic tactic as well as a visual tactic. Similarly, teleconferencing could also be a spoken tactic as well as an electronic tactic.

Issues Management. Another way to build long-term relationships with publics involves a proactive approach at scanning the environment for possible future issues that may threaten or present an opportunity for the organization. This is known as issues management. Regester and Larkin (2008) state, “Issues management was an attempt to define the strategies that companies needed to use to counter the efforts of activists groups which were putting pressure on legislators for stricter controls of business activity” (p. 40). Public relations practitioners play a role in issues management through the key tasks of planning, monitoring, analyzing, and communicating (Regester & Larkin, 2008).

In building relationships, public relations practitioners using the two-way communication model use more sophisticated research techniques to gather information about their publics, such as environmental scanning (Grunig et al., 1992). Berkowitz and Turnmire (1994) note the importance of community relations in public relations practices. Berkowitz and Turnmire (1994) state, “If an organization is to be effective in its relations with the local community, it must develop a program of regular environmental monitoring and proactively communicate with key publics about local issues that involve the organization” (p. 105). Environmental scanning

allows public relations practitioners to learn about the trends in an organization's environment. Environmental scanning may be formal or informal and include media content analysis, surveys of publics, focus group studies of key stakeholders, contacting the media, and monitoring written and phone complaints (Dozier, 1990). Issues management is a way public relations practitioners may perform environmental scanning. Lauzen (1997) describes the definition of issues management as "the process that allows organizations to know, understand, and more effectively interact with their environments" (p. 67). It is important to note that simply performing environmental scanning does not make for strategic public relations or issues management. Lauzen (1997) also states, "Scanning alone does not help the organization adapt to its environment. It is only within the context of issues management that the gathering of information is translated into strategic decision making" (p. 69).

Jaques (2009) discusses the importance of issues management as a post-crisis communication practice. He notes "failure to identify and manage the distinct category of issues which arise in the wake of a crisis can lead to prolonged reputational damage or even corporate demise" (p. 35). Building from crisis communication strategies, Jaques (2009) examines the definition of post-crisis and the need for continued planning after a crisis. In the case of coastal erosion, public relations practitioners must realize the need for continued communication about the issue of coastal erosion after a crisis, such as a hurricane.

Public Relations and News Media: The Connection

To find out what makes news, it is first necessary to review news values, the evolution of news from a more hard news perspective to more soft coverage, the economic factors driving the news media, and the way media frames a particular story. In doing so, public relations practitioners come to a better understanding of traditional news practices and are better equipped

to create messages that agree with media values. The media and public relations practitioners' relationship is complicated. The connection between media and public relations is important because the two increasingly rely on each other for information. Public relations practitioners need the mainstream media to pick up their stories to get the messages out to the public. When publics receive these public relations practitioners' messages, each public may become involved or behave in a different way. By implementing public relations theories and practices and specific organizations' communication strategies, public relations practitioners may better communicate with their publics.

Journalists and public relations practitioners have a unique relationship. Public relations practitioners need the media to disseminate their messages to mass audiences and the media need public relations practitioners as sources, to answer questions, and, sometimes, provide story ideas. Gower (2007) discusses implications for democracy when the lines of public relations and journalism are blurred. She notes that the government produces video news releases (VNRs) and sends them to the media disguised as objectively reported stories (Gower, 2007). Though this isn't solely characteristic of the government, Gower (2007) states, "Such techniques raise serious questions about the quality of information we receive, for we cannot develop an informed opinion about an issue if the information we receive is based on deception" (p. 1).

Larsson (2009) also examined the relationship between public relations practitioners and journalists. Larsson stated, "Studies of the relation between the [public relations] PR industry and the news media show that PR actors and journalists often establish close relations in order to fulfill a mutual need" (p. 132; see also Davis, 2002). Larsson (2009) researched the Swedish public relations industry and its implications on society and democracy.

Larsson (2009) notes that “the news media are the most prominent instrument for disseminating information in society” and that “media have become an increasingly important stage for organizations’ external communication” (p. 133). Public relations practitioners target the large national newspapers, television news and entertainment programs, as well as talk shows (Larsson, 2009). Larsson (2009) states that for opinion-generating campaigns, local and regional media become increasingly important to public relations practitioners. Larsson (2009) also distinguishes differences between certain public relations practices:

Journalists often claim a sceptical approach to those [public relations practitioners] representing commercial interests, as journalistic norms have long deemed textual product placement despicable. Representation in the interest of political organizations, on the other hand, sets a different tone because of these organizations’ legitimate opinion leaders. (p. 134)

Journalists also face pressures such as shrinking advertising revenue and diminishing newspaper circulation that create a stressful environment for journalists and results in less fieldwork (Larsson, 2009). Because of these factors, journalists are increasingly relying on public relations practitioners for information, even though some journalists view public relations practitioners as opponents (Larsson, 2009).

In Larsson’s (2009) study, journalists and public relations practitioners claim to have different relationships. Public relations practitioners claim a high level of respect for journalists and believe their relationship with the media is functional. Journalists, however, express less respect for public relations practitioners and claim they do not have a relationship (Larsson, 2009). Similarly, public relations practitioners believe their publicity efforts make the news because they gave journalists ideas (Larsson, 2009). Larsson (2009) states, “Editors and journalists, on the other hand, agree that they frequently receive promotional materials from

different organizations or consultants, but more or less resolutely state that they hardly ever consider using that type of material” (p. 144).

Framing and Public Relations

Public relations practitioners may present information to the media in many different ways, such as press releases, video news releases (VNRs), or press conferences (Smith, 2005; Wilcox et al., 2000). While there are different ways to disseminate the information, there are also different ways to frame the disseminated messages. Strategic communication may appeal to the logos, logic and reason, or pathos, emotion (Smith, 2005). Framing the message in terms of logos or pathos depends on what the public relations practitioner wants to achieve.

Hallahan (1999) discusses seven models of framing and the implications to public relations. Hallahan (1999) explains that framing helps to shape the public’s perspective of how they see the world. Through public relations practitioners’ different message frames, the public may form an image or opinion about an issue. Hallahan (1999) states, “Framing involves the processes of *inclusion* and *exclusion* as well as *emphasis*” (p. 207). Hallahan’s (1999) seven models include framing of situations, attributes, choices, actions, issues, responsibility, and news. Each of these frames relies on contextualization to establish a point of reference (Hallahan, 1999). Hallahan (1999) breaks these seven frames down in terms of applicability to public relations practitioners.

Hallahan (1999) notes the importance of public relations practitioners framing situations for key publics in a way “that it will be favorably received and reinforce the intent for all parties” (p. 224). Hallahan (1999) returns to Grunig and Hunt’s (1984) notion of two-way communication and notes that frames should facilitate dialogue and open discussion. Special

events, such as grand openings and celebrations, “must be staged or framed in a way that meets expectations of participants” (Hallahan, 1999, p. 225).

In framing of attributes, Hallahan (1999) notes public relations practitioners take care in presenting certain aspects of the causes, candidates, products, or services that they represent.

“Public relations workers routinely strive to position clients and their products or services so they will be evaluated favorably and so key publics will respond in a desired way when they buy, invest, donate, or work,” Hallahan states (p. 225). Public relations practitioners use positively valenced associations on self-interested promotions and negatively valenced associations when dealing with the competition (Hallahan, 1999).

Public relations practitioners may deal with a public who is uncertain of how to act in a situation. In framing of choices, Hallahan (1999) notes, “The proper framing of propositions can be influential when the key concern is to motivate people to make decisions” (p. 226). Public relations practitioners may face challenges in convincing key publics to act in a way that even presents moderate level of risk (Hallahan, 1999). Hallahan (1999) suggests accentuating positive gains in attracting new publics and focusing on potential losses to retain existing publics.

Similar to framing of choices, in Hallahan’s framing of actions, public relations practitioners must decide how to maximize behavioral intentions through advantageous framing of the action (Hallahan, 1999). Eliciting the desired behavior through public relations practitioners’ messages may include warnings or benefits (Hallahan, 1999).

Especially important for issues management is the way in which public relations practitioners’ frame issues (Hallahan, 1999). Hallahan (1999) states, “The ultimate objective of most issues management initiatives is to seek resolution of disputes in a expedient manner that

benefits all parties and avoids unnecessary conflict” (p. 227). Framing of issues as significant or insignificant to the public becomes important for public relations practitioners (Hallahan, 1999).

Public relations practitioners must also carefully frame responsibility. Hallahan (1999) states, “For organizations engaged in good works, the goal of many public relations efforts is to enhance the reputation of the organization by calling attention to the organization’s role in activities” (p. 227). In times of controversy, however, public relations practitioners may sometimes choose to avoid responsibility. This may refer to crisis communication strategies. For example, Smith (2005) notes disassociation or silence. If a public relations practitioner does not to acknowledge a situation, the practitioner may be utilizing a crisis communication strategy and framing the organization as not holding responsibility for the issue.

Finally, public relations practitioners may also frame news. Hallahan (1999) notes, “In proposing a particular story to a reporter or editor, public relations professionals engaged in two separate but related processes” (p. 228). These public relations practitioners’ processes are soliciting interest in the story and assuring the story is framed the way the public relations practitioner tells the story (Hallahan, 1999). Hallahan (1999) notes these journalists may accept or reject these given frames.

For the coastal restoration public relations practitioners, framing of actions, responsibility, issues, and news becomes critical. Through these various frames, the practitioners may elicit public support for coastal restoration, call for action from the government and public, relay the importance of coastal restoration in a way that resonates with the public, and ensure the news media pick up coastal restoration efforts around the state. By strategic framing of messages, coastal restoration public relations practitioners may reach a broader public.

What Makes the News

To learn more about how the public receives information from the media, it becomes important to look at what the public relations practitioners disseminate and what the mainstream media actually report. Journalism generally focuses on the who, what, when, where, why, and how of a story (Hamilton, 2004). It is important that public relations practitioners understand the function of the news media when they try to get their issue or event into the public eye.

Herbert J. Gans (2004) presents a sociological analysis of how national news organizations decide what constitutes news and the way in which this news is reported in his book, *Deciding What's News: A Study of CBS Evening News, NBC Nightly News, Newsweek, and Time*. Content analyses provide interesting insights surrounding the news media.

Gans (2004) notes the actors in the news. These are either “Knowns” or “Unknowns.” Gans (2004) states, “In American news, as in the news of all modern nations, the people who appear most frequently in the news are Knowns, and for the most part, those in official positions” (p. 9). Gans (2004) indicates five types of “Knowns” including incumbent presidents, presidential candidates, leading federal officials, state and local officials, and alleged and actual violators of the laws and mores. By contrast, the “Unknowns” are ordinary people, including protesters, rioters, strikers; victims; alleged and actual violators of the laws and mores; participants in unusual activities; and voters, survey respondents, and other aggregates.

Gans (2004) also describes the most popular types of activities reported. These eight activities include government conflicts and disagreements; government decisions, proposals, and ceremonies; government personnel changes; violent and nonviolent protests; crimes, scandals, and investigations; actual and averted disasters; innovation and tradition; and national

ceremonies. Especially interesting to this study will be what Gans (2004) notes as disaster coverage:

Television news gives a good deal of attention to small and large disasters, and to human effort to avert, control and explain them. Long-lasting natural catastrophes, or disasters with heavy toll of lives, are also reported in newsmagazines, but disasters that claim only a few victims, unless these are Knowns, are usually not reported. (p. 17)

In addition, governmental action, such as conflicts, decisions, and scandals, will provide interesting insight into what enters news coverage. Gans (2004) notes that most government conflict arises between “parts of the government and the public officials who personify them” (p. 16). Reported governmental decisions appear as conflict resolution, Gans (2004) notes, but this may not always be the case. Some governmental decisions do not resolve the conflict; they make them worse.

Gans (2004) also states, “Despite the explicit concern with people and their activities, the recurring subjects of the news are nation and society- their persistence, cohesion, and the conflicts and divisions threatening their cohesion” (p. 19). News is primarily about the nation. This makes threats to the nation incredibly newsworthy, including divisions in nation and society.

Bennett (2009) defines two different types of news: hard news and soft news. Bennett (2009) states, “A common journalistic hard-news standard is that reporting should consist of what an informed person in society should know” (p. 21). Media scholars consider this type of public affairs news as information necessary to preserve democracy. By contrast, soft news seeks only to grab the attention of the audience. It is emotional and immediate. Bennett (2009) notes, “Soft news is often constructed according to marketing guidelines aimed at grabbing the attention of the audience demographics that a program is trying to deliver to advertisers” (p. 21). Many scholars note the shift from hard news coverage to soft news coverage (Hamilton, 2004;

see also Zaller, 1993). This turns into a contest of reporters trying to find the most dramatic events to cover, rather than trying to better understand the situation at hand.

Hamilton (2004) examines the changes in mass media over time with an economic perspective in *All the News That's Fit to Sell*. He notes the rise of non-partisan reporting, the decline of hard news coverage, the transformation of reporters into celebrities, and the entrance of the Internet as a purveyor of information. He introduces the “five economic W’s” which replace the traditional news values of who, what, when, where, and why. These economic W’s ask: 1) Who cares about a particular piece of information? 2) What are they willing to pay to find it, or what are others willing to pay to reach them? 3) Where can media outlets or advertisers reach people? 4) When is it profitable to provide the information? 5) Why is it profitable to provide a given amount or type of news good? (Hamilton, 2004, p. 18). These economic W’s transform information into the news that the public receives.

In addition, Hamilton (2004) also notes that news coverage shifted from hard news to soft news. Soft news is cheaper to produce than hard news and tends to attract a certain profitable viewer. Hamilton (2004) argues that the advertising value of the marginal viewer changed the media landscape. Two types of news consumers exist: the average viewer and the marginal viewer (Hamilton, 2004). The average viewers are interested in public affairs information and tend to be older males. In contrast, the marginal viewer may only pay occasional attention to political and governmental news and tends to be female. He argues that these marginal viewers are the viewers who impacted the change in news coverage. If softer news provides a cheaper production alternative and attracts profitable viewers, it is no wonder that the media shifted toward this type of coverage.

Some news coverage does not allow for the public to receive all the relevant information about an event. Iyengar (1991) described news frames as either thematic or episodic frames. Thematic frames explore the origins of the problem at hand and the political, social, or economic context of the story, while episodic news framing tends to put the focus on people in distress or in a particular conflict (Iyengar, 1991). Bennett (2009) notes this type of news is personalized, dramatic, and fragmented, containing stories about social order and disorder. Bennett (2009) states, “Iyengar’s research shows that episodic news, which is the most commonly encountered form of reporting, particularly on television, leaves people with shallow understandings of the world around them” (p. 39).

Framing and News Media

Scheufele (1999) developed a “typology of framing research that classifies the applications of framing in the media effects research along two dimensions: media versus audience frame and frames as independent versus dependent variables” (p. 104). This typology helps classify existing framing research, describes how other research answered important research questions, and develops a common understanding of framing. Scheufele’s (1999) typology distinguishes between media frames as dependent variables, media frames as independent variables, individual frames as dependent variables, and individual frames as independent variables.

Media frames as dependent variables rely on five factors that can influence how a journalist frames an issue including the journalist’s social norms and values, organization pressures, pressures of interest groups, the journalist’s routine, and the journalist’s political ideology (Scheufele, 1999). Media frames as independent variables can be grouped into two categories: having an impact on attitudes or opinions and having measured media frames as the

independent variable and individual frames as the dependent variable (Scheufele, 1999).

Individual frames as dependent variables focus on individual frames as outcomes determined by the media frame. Iyengar's (1991) episodic and thematic framing in the individual frames as dependent variables category are included in Scheufele's categories. Scheufele (1999) notes that more research needs to be done on individual frames as independent variables (p. 114).

Scheufele (1999) links the typology with key variables in a process of media framing including "frame building, frame setting, individual-level effects of framing, and a link between individual frames and media frames (i.e., journalists' and elites' susceptibility to framing processes)" (p. 114-115). Frame building includes journalistic influences such as personal influences, organizational routines, and elite external sources (Scheufele, 1999; Gans, 1979). Frame setting is "concerned with the salience of issue attributes" with salience referring to how easily an audience member can access previous associations (Scheufele, 1999, p. 116). Individual-level effects of framing rely on behavioral, attitudinal and cognitive variables. Journalists as audiences admits that journalists are also members of the public and "are equally susceptible to the very frames that they use describe events and issues" (Scheufele, 1999, p. 117).

News Coverage of Environmental Issues

For environmental issues to receive large amounts of news coverage, the issue should be pressing. One such issue is climate change. Boykoff (2007) studies the media's presentation of anthropogenic climate change. Boykoff (2007) notes that humans are, in large part, responsible for the current climate change. The frames the media use to relay information to the public about the climate change, however, become distorted from reality. Boykoff (2007) states:

US mass media coverage of anthropogenic climate change is not a simple collection of news articles and clips produced by journalists and producers; rather, media coverage

signifies key frames derived through complex and non-linear relationships between scientists, policy actors and the public that is often mediated by journalists' news stories. (p. 478)

Boykoff (2007) concludes that media framing of climate change are complicated by the fact that different actors compete to get their message across. Boykoff (2007) states, "Scientists need to re-invigorate initiatives to increase consistent contact with mass media to influence these contested discursive spaces with, in this case, anthropogenic climate change evidence" (p. 486).

Unlike climate change, news coverage of coastal erosion presentation is not a popular topic of study. Marmillion (2006) notes that the news media neglected the issue of coastal erosion in the coverage of Hurricane Katrina. He discusses warnings issued by Louisiana officials about the devastating effects of coastal erosion and the serious implications the state faced. Marmillion (2006) states that five days before Katrina landed, "Governor Kathleen Blanco led an entourage of local, state and federal leaders on a tour from New Orleans to the most hurricane-prone regions of the state to build citizen unity for efforts to halt coastal erosion" (p. 49). Katrina amplified the problem of coastal erosion. The United States Geological Survey reported that Louisiana had been losing 24 square miles of land per year to erosion. In the wake of Hurricane Katrina, Louisiana lost nearly 200 square miles of land in two days. The media did not focus on steps the government should be taking to address these major coastal losses. Marmillion (2006) also states, "The media pounced on the notion of 'if' not 'how' to rebuild one of America's unique major cities" (p. 50).

Hurricane Katrina and the News Media

Bennett, Lawrence, and Livingston (2007) note the excellent and actual reporting done by journalists during Hurricane Katrina. Bennett et al. (2009) state, "Intrepid journalists broadcast live reports of the storm, the flood, the human suffering, and the failure of government officials

to comprehend and respond to the disaster” (p. 165). The national news did not just accept the statements provided by government officials. They asked the tough questions. The journalists sought to hold government officials accountable and expressed public outrage.

President Bush visited the Gulf Coast on September 2. He noted that the relief efforts needed to be stepped up and promised to fix things:

We got a lot of rebuilding to do. First, we're going to save lives and stabilize the situation. And then we're going to help these communities rebuild. The good news is - and it's hard for some to see it now - that out of this chaos is going to come a fantastic Gulf Coast, like it was before. (Kimball, 2005)

Bush's optimistic demeanor about the situation in New Orleans and the Gulf Coast angered many. The public believed that the president needed to act more serious about the grave situation facing the country (Kimball, 2005).

At the time, the director of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), Michael Brown, assured NBC Nightly News anchor Brian Williams that FEMA sought to get the city of New Orleans back up and running and worked to rescue those stranded in the Superdome and Ernest N. Morial Convention Center. Williams responded that the public heard him and that he would be held accountable for his words. Three days later with no results, the local newspaper, *The Times-Picayune*, questioned Brown's actions and even President Bush's promises. Bennett et al. (2007) cite the editorial:

Dear Mr. President: We heard you loud and clear Friday when you visited our devastated city and the Gulf Coast and said, 'What is not working, we're going to make right.' Please forgive us if we wait to see proof of your promise before believing you. But we have good reason for our skepticism... Every official at the Federal Emergency Management Agency should be fired, Director Michael Brown especially. In a nationally televised interview Thursday night, he said his agency hadn't known until that day that thousands of storm victims were stranded at the Ernest M. Morial Convention Center. He gave another nationally televised interview the next morning and said 'We've provided food to all the people at the Convention Center so that they've gotten at least one, if not two meals, every single day.' ... Lies don't get any more bald-faced than that, Mr.

President. Yet, when you met with Mr. Brown Friday morning, you told him, ‘You’re doing a heck of a job.’...That’s unbelievable. (p. 165)

Bennett et al. (2007) note that not only did the *Times-Picayune* responded this way to governmental officials; the *New York Times* also supplied criticism. In a Nexis search of *New York Times* articles from August 29 to September 7, 2005, 133 articles about Hurricane Katrina mentioned Michael Brown, FEMA, or President Bush with 46 containing “specific mentions of government failure or incompetence” (Bennett et al., 2007, p. 168).

The news media picked up on stories of conflict, such as looting and crime, racism, and government failure (Bennett et al., 2007; see also Prince, 2005; Sommers, Apfelbaun, Dukes, Toosi & Wang, 2006; Stabile, 2007). However, a main story that the media did not give much attention to was the issue of coastal erosion (Marmillion, 2006). This may have to do with the fact that coastal erosion is a complicated issue with many variables. With the media missing the importance of coastal restoration, the coastal restoration public relations practitioners must find a way to get across their message.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH QUESTIONS

By determining the different communication strategies of AWF, CRCL, and GOCA, and identifying which organization receives the majority of the media's attention, best practices may be developed for coastal erosion public relations practitioners attempting to disseminate their organization's message to residents of Louisiana and the United States.

RQ1: What public relations strategies and related tactics are America's WETLAND

Foundation, Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana, and the Governor's Office of Coastal Activities using to spread awareness about coastal erosion?

It is also important to determine messages public relations practitioners disseminate to the public. If their messages are not consistent with their public relations strategies and tactics, implications may arise for the communication's effectiveness.

RQ2: What coastal erosion messages are public relations practitioners trying to get to the public through the media?

By learning what messages the media pick up, the researcher will have a better understanding of the themes that public relations practitioners should use in framing their message to ensure the media uses the message.

RQ3a: Are the media picking up the public relations practitioners' messages?

RQ3b: What types of coastal erosion messages are the media attending to?

Determining the organization that is most often cited by the media as a source may give insight to which organizations the media believe are more credible. Additionally, if an organization puts out a substantial amount of communication and the media does not pick up on the information; the organization may need to rethink its public relations strategies and tactics.

RQ4: Compared to communication output, what organization receives the most media coverage of its messages?

CHAPTER 4: METHOD

Both qualitative and quantitative research data were collected for this study. Both types of research provide benefits to the researcher in answering the research questions and establishing a best practices approach to public relations in regard to coastal erosion.

Qualitative Research

Qualitative research allows the researcher to ask questions and gain perspective usually in a natural setting. Qualitative research can take the form of focus groups, field observations, in-depth interviews, and case studies (Wimmer & Dominick, 2006). For this research, in-depth interviews were conducted. Lindlof (1995) described the advantages of interviews. Lindlof (1995) stated, “At its best, the qualitative interview creates an event in which one person (the interviewer) encourages another person to articulate interests or experiences freely,” (p. 163). The interview allowed for the interviewer to access “experiential or subjective realities” of the interviewee (Lindlof, 1995, p. 163). Additionally, regarding interviews as qualitative research, Lindlof (1995) noted:

Stated simply, the researcher defines a purpose for such conversations to occur, and selects certain social actors to advance the conversational purpose. The researcher then elicits talk about their experiences. Through this method the communication researcher tries to gain a critical vantage point on the sense making in communicative performances and practices. (p. 165)

Additionally, Wimmer and Dominick (2006) note advantages to the in-depth interview including wealth of detail and more accurate responses when compared to traditional survey methods (p. 135).

Because the organizations, AWF, CRCL, and GOCA, varied from government to non-profit organizations, the researcher needed to learn about each organization and how it operated in a one-on-one interview with the public relations practitioner or highest-ranking communicator

of each organization. In this way, the researcher could customize the interview to the individual respondent based on the answers to given questions. The researcher also needed to have a positive rapport with the respondents should additional interviews become necessary.

In-depth Interviews. In-depth interviews were conducted with the public relations practitioners or the highest-ranking communicators at AWF, CRCL, and GOCA (See Table 7). Again, the purpose of these interviews was to assess what public relations strategies and tactics the public relations practitioners used in disseminating coastal erosion messages.

Table 7.

Public Relations Practitioners by Title, Organization, and Interview Date

Public Relations Practitioners by Title, Organization, and Interview Date			
	Title	Organization	Interview Date
Lisa Noble	Program Manager	AWF	January 27, 2010
Chris Macaluso	Communications Director	GOCA	October 2, 2009
			January 25, 2010
Steven Peyronnin	Executive Director	CRCL	November 4, 2009
Todd Ragusa	Accounts Supervisor	AWF	October 9, 2009

Ragusa served as an accounts supervisor with the Marmillion + Company, which handled communication for AWF. Noble, program manager, has been with AWF for seven years and understands the ends and outs of the communication process. She provided additional insights into AWF's public relations strategies and tactics and communication. Peyronnin, former communications director at CRCL, took over the Executive Director's role in 2007. As former Communications Director, Peyronnin understood the communication practices of CRCL.

Macaluso is the communications director for GOCA and OCPR. Macaluso handles all communication for the offices.

These interviews included questions (see APPENDIX A) about the history and mission of the organization, challenges and/or opportunities the organization faced, the communication function of the organization, different publics the organization has and how the organization builds and cultivates relationships with these publics, the long-term goals of the organization, the measures of effectiveness used to identify if the public relations strategies and related tactics were successful, and other variables affecting the organization's public relations strategies and tactics.

The researcher obtained Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval for the interviews (See APPENDIX B). The IRB number is E4876.

Quantitative Research

In addition to qualitative data collection, quantitative data was also collected. Quantitative research allows for systematic analysis of data through measurement. Quantitative research methods can be described as telephone surveys, and mail surveys. Another method that yields quantitative results is the content analysis.

Wright (1986) defines content analysis as “a research technique for the systematic classification and description of communication content according to certain usually predetermined categories” (p. 125). These categories must be clearly defined so other researchers may replicate the study (Wright, 1986). Berger (2000) notes that a content analysis “measures and counts certain things” (p. 174). Berger (2000) describes the advantages of using content analyses, such as the unobtrusiveness of the study, relative inexpensiveness, using materials that are relatively easy to obtain and work with, and yield quantifiable data.

In this study, content analyses were conducted on organizational press releases and news articles from local and national newspapers. Hurricane Katrina presented a unique opportunity for public relations practitioners to frame coastal erosion in terms the public's self-interest. The researcher analyzed organizational press releases and newspaper articles beginning August 29, 2005, the day Hurricane Katrina made landfall, until August 29, 2009. This gave the researcher four years of data from the coastal restoration organizations and the local and national newspapers take on the issue of coastal erosion.

Organizational Press Releases. To understand public relations messages, a content analysis of AWF, CRCL, and GOCA's press releases was conducted. These press releases were accessed through each organization's website. AWF's website tab "News & Events" allows users to select the "Press Releases" option and browse through AWF's current and archived releases by the organization ("AWF Press Releases," 2009). AWF's website contained 102 press releases from August 29, 2005 to August 29, 2009.

On CRCL's website, the "Library" tab allows for users to select from press releases, news stories, and Coalition documents with "Press Releases" organized by year published ("CRCL Press Releases," 2009). CRCL's website contained six press releases from August 29, 2005 to August 29, 2009.

GOCA's press releases are not located on its website. To access these press releases, the user must select "CPRA" under "Associated Programs and Organizations" and scroll down to find "News Room" ("News Room, 2009). GOCA had 89 press releases from August 29, 2005 to August 29, 2009.

By analyzing the messages of the press releases, the researcher gained a better understanding of how AWF, CRCL, and GOCA tried to communicate to its publics and the

media. All of the press releases from each organization were considered in the content analysis (n=197).

After reading the entire press release from AWF, CRCL, or GOCA, the source of the press release was identified (See APPENDIX D). Next, the title of the press release, the date of the press release, and the length of the press release were coded. The coder determined what attributes occurred in the press release. Attributes were coded for the presence or absence of the attribute. The attributes included cost, culture, economic effects, ecotourism, education, engineering, fisheries, geology, government, hurricane, oil and gas industry, philanthropy, ports, research, shipping, spotlight of the organization, wildlife, or other. See Table 8 for a complete definition of each attribute. As such, any given press release could contain more than one attribute. Finally, the press release was coded for major attribute from the previously mentioned attributes. The researcher determined the major attribute after reading the entire press release.

Table 8.

Definition of Attributes by Category

Definition of Attributes by Category	
Attribute	Attribute Definition
Cost	The amount of money it would cost to attain a sustainable coast; any mentions of federal, state, or local funding
Culture	References to the communities of Louisiana, Mardi Gras, Cajun food, and other cultural notions
Economic effects	National and Louisiana's economic loss as a result of continual coastal erosion
Ecotourism	Activities such as boating, watersports, hiking, bird watching, camping, nature photography, and swamp tours; references to how ecotourism in Louisiana is affected by diminishing wetlands and coastal erosion

(Table 8 continued)

Definition of Attributes by Category	
Attribute	Attribute Definition
Education	References to educational programs about coastal erosion and restoration
Engineering	References to work done by USACE, OCPR, or other engineering entities; or past, present, or future engineering projects to save the wetlands
Fisheries	Includes commercial and recreation fishing, shrimping, and oyster and blue crab harvesting; references to the impact Louisiana fisheries would sustain with coastal erosion and diminished wetlands
Geology	Natural process of sediment moving down the Mississippi River or other geologic instances
Government	Appeals or lobbying to the President, Governor, state, or local officials; calls of action on the federal, state, and local parish levels
Hurricane	Damage Louisiana would receive from future hurricanes due to diminishing wetlands; extensive past damage from recent hurricanes
Oil and gas industry	References to the industry and how coastal erosion affects the players
Philanthropy	Highlights the organization's public image, may include donations to wetlands protection programs
Ports	Specific ports mentioned and the effect coastal erosion has on the ports
Research	Research done by educational organization or others about wetlands or coastal erosion
Shipping	Effects coastal erosion and diminishing wetlands have on shipping throughout Louisiana and the United States; shoaling or other coastal restoration efforts that may hinder shipping
Spotlight of an organization	Highlighted the recent work or accomplishment of an organization
Wildlife	Impact of coastal erosion and diminishing wetlands on different species of wildlife

(Table 10 continued)

Definition of Attributes by Category	
Attribute	Attribute Definition
Other	References not fitting aforementioned descriptions; may include meeting times or agenda notes

The researcher served as the primary coder. A secondary coder was used to test for intercoder reliability for the quantitative variables. The second coder coded a randomly selected 10 percent of the press releases. The researcher conducted initial and follow up training for the second coder. Scott's pi was used to test for intercoder reliability (See Table 9).

Of the press release general information, such as press release organization's origin, title of the press release, date of the release, and length of the release, the intercoder reliability had a perfect Scott's pi of 1. Of the attributes, five had a perfect Scott's pi, while an acceptable Scott's pi (between .624 and .988) was found for the 13 attributes. Scott's pi of .705 was found for major attribute of the press releases.

Table 9.

Intercoder Reliability for Press Releases

Intercoder Reliability for Press Releases		
Variable	Simple Agreement	Scott's Pi
Press release source	100%	1
Title of press release	100%	1
Release date	100%	1
Length of press release	100%	1
Cost	90%	.688
Culture	85%	.68

(Table 9 continued)

Intercoder Reliability for Press Releases		
Variable	Simple Agreement	Scott's Pi
Economic effect	85%	.699
Ecotourism	100%	1
Education	90%	.792
Engineering	100%	1
Fisheries	100%	1
Government	90%	.988
Hurricane	100%	1
Oil and gas industries	90%	.733
Philanthropy	95%	.64
Ports	100%	1
Research	85%	.624
Shipping	95%	.64
Spotlight	95%	.875
Wildlife	95%	.828
Other	95%	.771
Major Attribute	75%	.705

News Articles. A content analysis of news articles from *The Advocate*, *The Times-Picayune*, and *The New York Times* was performed. The purpose was to determine what attributes the media focused on and neglected of the issue of coastal erosion. A LexisNexis search of the target newspapers with the search terms “Louisiana and wetlands” or “Louisiana and coastal erosion” found 983 articles from *The Advocate*, 2,353 articles from *The Times-Picayune*, and 130 articles from *The New York Times* from August 29, 2005 to August 29, 2009

for a total of 3,466 articles. Further examination was required to see which articles actually pertained to coastal erosion and coastal restoration of Louisiana's wetlands. The researcher read the articles to determine which applied to this study. After analyzing the articles, 2,263 articles were removed from the sample due to either article duplication or the article was not actually about coastal erosion. For example, "Natives traversed bayous, swamps; They were portages from lakes to river" appeared twice in *The Times-Picayune*. Also, "Something is killing the marsh grass, but no one is sure of what it is" appeared in *The New York Times* articles four times. The article "Specialty camps offer a variety of summer activities" focused on summer camps in the New Orleans area with a wetlands camp offered Marrero in *The Times-Picayune*. *The Advocate* article, "It's not too late to make mental move into new year," promoted the 2007 Louisiana Conservationist calendar. The resulting numbers included 440 articles from *The Advocate*, 712 from *The Times-Picayune*, and 51 articles from *The New York Times* for a total of 1,203 articles.

The researcher took a random sample from the state newspaper articles and considered all of the national newspaper coverage. Twenty percent of news stories from *The Advocate* (n= 88) and *The Times-Picayune* (n=143) and the total number of stories from *The New York Times* (n=51) resulted in a sample of 282 articles (n=282).

The resulting 282 articles were coded. After reading the story, the coder chose which newspaper the story appeared in, as well as the title, date, and length of the news story (See APPENDIX F). The same attributes that were coded in the press releases were applied to the media content analysis: cost, culture, economic effects, ecotourism, education, engineering, fisheries, geology, government, hurricane, oil and gas industry, philanthropy, ports, research, shipping, spotlight of the organization, wildlife, and other (See Table 8). Again, attributes were

coded for presence or absence of the attribute. Following the attributes, the coder chose the major attribute of the newspaper article. The researcher determined the major attribute after reading the entire the newspaper article. This attribute was the primary focus of the news article. Additionally, the newspaper article was coded into hard news, like public affairs news, or soft news, such as entertainment. The newspaper article content analysis also included determining who acted a source of information. The choices were AWF, CRCL, GOCA and Other, with a space provided to include what was the other source. If AWF, CRCL, or GOCA was quoted in the news story, the researcher wrote verbatim that portion of the news story.

The researcher served as the primary coder. A secondary coder was used to test for intercoder reliability for the quantitative variables. The second coder coded a randomly selected 10 percent of the newspaper articles. The researcher conducted initial and follow up training for the second coder. Scott's pi was used to test for intercoder reliability (See Table 10).

Eight of the variables had a perfect Scott's pi of 1, while an acceptable Scott's pi (between .631 and .909) was found for the other 17 variables. Arguably, one of the more important variables in the study, Scott's pi of .871 was found for the major attribute of the news articles. Unacceptably low Scott's pi was initially found for three of the 25 variables.

Consensus coding was done for these three variables and following the consensus coding; those three variables had a Scott's pi between .844 and 1.

Table 10.

Intercoder Reliability for News Articles

Intercoder Reliability for News Articles		
Variable	Simple Agreement	Scott's Pi
Newspaper Source	100%	1

(Table 10 continued)

Intercoder Reliability for News Articles		
Variable	Simple Agreement	Scott's Pi
Title of News story	100%	1
Date	100%	1
Length	100%	1
Cost	92.9%	.854
Economic effect	100%	1 ^a
Ecotourism	96.4%	.78
Education	96.4%	.78
Engineering	89.3%	.747
Fisheries	92.9%	.81
Geology	92.9%	.856
Government	89.3%	.699
Hurricane	92.9%	.844 ^a
Oil and gas industries	92.9%	.825
Philanthropy	96.4%	.648
Ports	100%	1 ^a
Research	96.4%	.887
Shipping	92.9%	.708
Spotlight	96.4%	.648
Wildlife	100%	1
Other	89.3%	.661
Major attribute	89.3%	.871
News type	82.1%	.631
Source citation	100%	1

Notes: The use of superscripts indicates consensus coding was done on the variable.

CHAPTER 5: RESULTS

To understand the public relations strategies and related tactics of the public relations practitioners from the coastal restoration organizations, the researcher conducted in-depth interviews with the public relations practitioner or highest-ranking communicator with AWF, CRCL, and GOCA and performed content analysis on the organizations' press releases and relevant newspaper articles about Louisiana and wetlands.

In-depth Interviews: Role of Public Relations Practitioners

The public relations practitioners held different positions within their organizations. Their titles included Communication Director, Accounts Supervisor, Program Manager, and Executive Director. These public relations practitioners performed varying duties to fulfill their role in the organization. From writing press releases to assisting journalists with interviews, these public relations practitioners utilized different public relations strategies and tactics.

America's WETLAND Foundation. Todd Ragusa worked as an account supervisor for the Marmillion + Company, which handled AWF's communications. Also with AWF, Lisa Noble, program manager, provided additional information and insight into AWC. Ragusa appeared to have more of a technician role in the organization. Ragusa noted that Valsin Marmillion served as the highest-ranking public relations practitioner at the Marmillion + Company. Marmillion, however, was unreachable. Ragusa described his role as supervisor of four or five communication staff members.

Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana. Steven Peyronnin at CRCL previously held the title of communication director, but replaced Mark Davis as the director of CRCL. In his interview, Peyronnin noted CRCL had not filled the position of communication director. Peyronnin served as a manager. Peyronnin explained that as a manager, understanding how the

organization worked became an important part of the job (personal communication, November 4, 2009). Peyronnin, however, is the only member of CRCL performing communications.

Governor's Office of Coastal Activities. Chris Macaluso, public information director at GOCA, held the highest public relations position out of the interviewees. Macaluso described his positions as managerial. He served the organizations by making critical, long-term communication decisions. Macaluso, however, described his role as more reactive than proactive. "I've been relegated to being reactive. Most of what I do is media relations," Macaluso noted in his interview (personal communication, October 2, 2009). Macaluso has one assistant, Miki Teer, who serves in a public relations technician role for GOCA.

In-depth Interviews: Publics

All of the public relations practitioners' organizations expressed the importance of communication to their respective publics, including spreading awareness of the coastal erosion issue and building relationships with their publics.

America's WETLAND Foundation. Ragusa said AWF focused on local and state awareness, but stressed that without national support coastal restoration would not receive the necessary federal funding (personal communication, October 9, 2009). While AWF serves a national, state, and regional public, it also tries to bring international awareness to the issue of coastal erosion. Ragusa said AWF partnered with the World Delta Dialog to make coastal erosion an international issue and gain a wider public (personal communication, October 9, 2009). Ragusa said, "We are trying to make the Mississippi River the center for all things delta" (personal communication, October 9, 2009).

Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana. Peyronnin described that CRCL's publics included residents of coastal and non-coastal Louisiana, and "entities responsible for

implementing restoration and protection policies” (personal communication, November 4, 2009). Peyronnin described that as a non-profit, CRCL was not allowed to adopt a political position, but could lobby.

Governor’s Office of Coastal Activities. Macaluso described GOCA’s publics as “very diverse,” including Louisiana and national Congressmen, the presidential administration, Louisiana residents, and everyone in between including shrimpers and crabbers (personal communication, October 2, 2009).

In-depth Interviews: Public Relations Strategies and Tactics

The coastal restoration organizations use different strategies to reach these publics (See Table 11). The public relations strategies range in differences from goals to publics. The public relations practitioners, however, all agree that public relations strategy of communication is essential to spread awareness and achieve results. The public relations practitioners indicated the resulting strategies during their interviews.

Table 11.

Public Relations Strategies of Coastal Restoration Organizations

Public Relations Strategies of Coastal Restoration Organizations		
AWF	CRCL	GOCA
Build and maintain relationships	Advocacy	Stakeholder engagement
Promote education of coastal erosion	Grow and maintain CRCL	Media coverage
Brand AWF and AWC	Effective communication	Build awareness using Governor Bobby Jindal

To achieve the public relations strategies, public relations practitioners use different tactics. The public relations practitioners listed the following tactics during their interviews (See Table 12).

Table 12.

Public Relations Tactics of Coastal Restoration Organizations

Public Relations Tactics of Coastal Restoration Organizations		
AWF	CRCL	GOCA
Branding	Email to membership list	Press releases
Special events	Mainstream media coverage	Website management
Conferences	Op-eds	Brochures
Partnerships	Other news coverage	Public meetings
Internet	Workshops	Press conferences
Editorials	Conferences	Educational materials
Paid media	Lobbying	Conventions
In-kind media	Service projects	
Television PSAs		
Radio PSAs		
Educational materials		
Mascots		

RQ1: What public relations strategies and related tactics are America’s WETLAND Foundation, Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana, and the Governor’s Office of Coastal Activities using to spread awareness about coastal erosion?

America’s WETLAND Foundation. In answering RQ1 for AWF, Ragusa explained AWF’s public relations strategies. Ragusa noted that AWF’s public relations strategies included cultivating and maintaining a relationship with its publics and like-minded organizations,

introducing the issue of coastal erosion to school children, and creating a consistent brand of AWF and its messages. Ragusa said:

We use a multi-prong strategy. At the beginning, we did a lot of in-state public outreach because Louisiana residents didn't really know a lot about the issue. People in the state weren't aware of the problem of coastal erosion. We wanted to reach out to them. (personal communication, October 9, 2009)

Ragusa said that this outreach was successful to a national audience. "We...conducted polling. Now, people in the state are more knowledgeable," Ragusa said (personal communication, October 9, 2009).

Ragusa cited another public relations strategy as a storm warning campaign. "We had a rally-style concert in New Orleans and Houma, a boat parade along the intracoastal canal, from Morgan City to Houma and Larose to Houma," Ragusa said (personal communication, October 9, 2009). Ragusa noted that the campaign garnered 108 media hits.

Noble also noted that at AWF, communication was a central public relations strategy and discussed a "basic strategic plan" that is redeveloped every three years (Noble, personal communication, January 27, 2010). "It outlines the strategies we use. For every one of our tactics, or assumptions, we've come up with four or five communication components," Noble said (personal communication, January 27, 2010). Noble listed these tactics as website management, earned media, and high profile events.

Speaking of the AWF's public relations strategies and tactics, Noble stated:

We probably have too many prongs! Everything we do is to communicate [the message]. Our goal is to save coastal Louisiana. We put everything to that goal from press conferences with senators, storm warning events, hurricane season events, and highlighting hurricane season. (personal communication, January 27, 2010)

Noble also mentioned a public relations strategy to reach the national and international audiences. Noble said, "An example of our international audience is the World Delta Dialogue.

America's Energy Coast represents our regional strategy" (personal communication, January 27, 2010).

Ragusa also discussed bringing the message to a national audience consistent with AWF's message of protecting not only America's WETLAND, but America's Energy Coast. He said:

We are part of America's Energy Coast. This includes Louisiana, Texas, Mississippi, and Alabama. These states have similar vulnerabilities and fuel the nation. A large portion of the country's energy comes from this area. Hurricane Gustav and Ike made gas prices soar. We try to brand these four states so we have a louder voice when we try to get federal and national attention. (personal communication, October 9, 2009)

Ragusa cited another public relations strategy for a national audience. He pointed out that sometimes individuals are driven by self-interest and appealing to that self-interest is the best way to garner support. Ragusa stated:

We use an upriver strategy. The Mississippi River feeds wetlands and is connected to 33 states and two or three Canadian providences. We are not just worried about pesticides, but stuff from New Orleans comes up from tires to corn, so our commodities are connected. (personal communication, October 9, 2009)

Ragusa and AWF hope that through this type of framing, a national and international audience will become receptive to the idea of helping Louisiana restore the coast.

Another public relations strategy that Ragusa mentioned was media relations. "We create outreach opportunities and use print and media strategies to reach out to the media and public and generally gain support for the Foundation," Ragusa said (personal communication, October 9, 2009). Ragusa also stated that media hits helped measure the effectiveness of this public relations strategy.

Additionally, Ragusa mentioned that public relations was one strategy of the campaign. Ragusa said, "Our essential goal is public relations. We want to raise public education and public

awareness of coastal erosion. Public relations is an important strategy” (personal communication, October 9, 2009).

Ragusa stated that AWF used tactics such as branding, events, conferences, partnerships, Internet, editorials, paid media, in-kind and earned media, and television and radio public service announcements (PSAs). These tactics helped AWF achieve put their public relations strategies in action. He also discussed reaching a younger audience, as one of AWF’s tactics, through different programs like “Wetlands Week.” Ragusa said, “It gets kids thinking about the wetlands. They will pick up the torch about saving the coast as they get older, so it’s important that we reach them now” (personal communication, October 9, 2009).

Another tactic is the use of The Esturians. Ragusa said:

We have mascots, The Esturians. The Esturians are cartoon characters of different animals you would find in wetlands. We also go to parades with the Esturians and kids recognize them. They are happy to see them and happy for the work we’re doing. People are happy because the work we do is close to them. (personal communication, October 9, 2009)

Ragusa noted that this tactic was important to fulfilling the public relations strategy of cultivating relationships with the community and AWF’s publics.

Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana. Regarding CRCL’s public relations strategies, Peyronnin referred to them as “services” (personal communication, November 4, 2009).

Peyronnin described CRCL’s public relations strategies as advocacy for coastal restoration through government lobbying, growing and maintaining the organization through communication, and communicating effectively to a large constituency.

Peyronnin described CRCL’s advocacy and said, “We advocate. First, we work with state, parishes, federal agencies, and Congress on policy and authorizations and legal action to put in place programs and actions that will restore coastal Louisiana” (personal communication,

November 4, 2009). Peyronnin noted conflict with policy, technical and engineering aspects, and among landowners. “We understand these challenges and help to identify them,” Peyronnin said (personal communication, November 4, 2009). He also noted the need to make sure everyone worked together. Peyronnin said, “To do that requires that we have significant input from diverse groups. We communicate with them and try to achieve a solution” (personal communication, November 4, 2009). This public relations strategy goes with another strategy that Peyronnin does not mention specifically as a strategy, building relationships with the publics. Peyronnin does note the importance of the relationships between CRCL and its publics but for promoting the organization.

Another public relations strategy that Peyronnin refers to is growing and maintaining the organization. He said, “It is our responsibility to grow and maintain this organization through conferences and workshops, regional and statewide groups with the latest scientific analysis, and put forth information that helps state and federal partners design an program and implement it” (personal communication, November 4, 2009). Peyronnin referred to public relations tactics such as a community-based restoration projects, which will be discussed in more detail later. Peyronnin noted the importance of research in the growing and maintaining the organization strategy. Peyronnin said, “We look at how the coast functions, how it’s important, such as its fisheries, navigation, culture, and oil and gas, and at the same time try to stabilize land loss in certain areas” (personal communication, November 4, 2009).

Peyronnin described CRCL’s final public relations strategy as effective communication to a large constituency. Peyronnin describes the issues CRCL faced in regards to communication. He said, “We have challenges, like what’s happening on the coast with

different levels, what action needs to be taken, and how [the public] can help us” (personal communication, November 4, 2009).

Peyronnin discussed that these three public relations strategies directly related to CRCL’s four communication goals. These four goals include designing and maintaining a communication strategy, matching and expanding communication tools with targeted audiences, increasing media communication based on CRCL’s profiles and positions, and developing an evaluation plan for communication. Media relations is a public relations strategy, but Peyronnin also looked at media relations as a goal and tactic of the organization. Peyronnin discussed CRCL’s media relations as a way of communicating with its publics. He stated:

...Our goal is to establish and continue the recognition of the organization and what we do. Public support is necessary. Then we have to demonstrate that we are effective and utilize the platform to be effective. It’s like the chicken and the egg. We need the media presence to communicate to raise the profile of the organization and effect policy with decision makers by saying we have the public opinion voice. (personal communication, November 4, 2009)

Peyronnin noted communication as one of CRCL’s tactics. He noted that the “communication loop” played a huge part in achieving CRCL’s public relations strategies. He said, “We are advocates and in many ways we have to communicate with stakeholders and talk and listen to publics to frame our position and then advocate for those positions” (personal communication, November 4, 2009). Peyronnin noted that a public relations tactic used to communicate with CRCL’s publics was a listserv, where emails are sent out to a membership list. Of this tactic, Peyronnin said, “We have an electronic membership list. Members of organizations signed up to receive emails. We no longer have a print newsletter; we try to stick to electronic messages” (personal communication, November 4, 2009).

He also discussed the tactic of using the mainstream media with op-eds and garnering other news coverage for the media relations strategy. Peyronnin said:

[We receive feedback] to some extent from the media, our peers, or other audiences say things and we follow up with letters to the editor. We also perform personal communication. We have an extensive network of communication after a news story. Peer-to-peer personal discussion takes place also. We also hear back electronically because its easy to create feedback loops. (personal communication, November 4, 2009)

Though Peyronnin doesn't mention community relations as a public relations strategy, he does mention some community relations tactics. Peyronnin described CRCL's community relations tactics such as workshops, conferences, and physical coastal restoration projects designed to interact with the public. He said, "We have a community-based restoration program that puts volunteers together and does physical restoration projects" (personal communication, November 4, 2009).

Governor's Office of Coastal Activities. Regarding GOCA's public relations strategies, Macaluso described that GOCA's public relations strategies included stakeholder engagement, media coverage especially through documentary-style stories, and using Louisiana Governor Bobby Jindal to spread the issue of coastal erosion. Though Macaluso described these three components as public relations strategies, the terminology may not be correct, as discussed in the next chapter. Macaluso also noted that staff limitations allowed for only reactive public relations strategies. Macaluso described that the public relations staff size of GOCA and OCPR contributed to the reactive role in which Macaluso operated. Macaluso stated:

We certainly have ideas about how we would like to involve the public more, how we would like to reach out especially to educators and teachers to get more information about the office spread around, but I think the main thrust of what we're trying to do right now is to get our face in front of as many people as possible with the limited assets that we have in terms of personnel. (personal communication, January 25, 2010)

Macaluso said of stakeholder engagement, "We try to address as many stakeholder groups as possible. We try to have as many public information groups as we can to gather information" (personal communication, January 25, 2010). Though Macaluso believed he was

describing the public relations strategy, he was talking about the tactics that he used to achieve that strategy.

Macaluso also described his media relations public relations strategy. Macaluso said:

We try to engage our public and stakeholders in the same kind of information that we send to the media. We try to make our executives available to the media as much as we can, as much as their time allows. We try to arrange as many long-form television interviews, documentary style pieces that we can. We try to get the media into the public, and where we work, and out to the project site as much as possible. (personal communication, January 25, 2010)

The media relations strategy appeared to operate with transparency as Macaluso described it.

Unfortunately, Macaluso described that the media and to some extent the public are only interested in coastal erosion and his office during certain times. He said, “Every time hurricane season approaches, more than than at any other time, people want to know what we’re doing, what’s the status of this project, what’s going on with these levees... That’s what reminds people” (personal communication, January 25, 2010).

Macaluso also described the importance of being a credible source to the news media.

Macaluso said,

... We want the media to come to us. If Garland Robinette does a talk show on [radio station] WWL, I don’t want him asking [Lake Pontchartrain Basin Foundation director] Carlton Dufrechou how the state should spend this money. I want him asking us” (personal communication, January 25, 2010).

Macaluso discussed that as the head authority on coastal restoration issues, it was important for the media to come to GOCA for information. Macaluso said, “... We want people to look at us as the authority on these issues, because we are” (personal communication, January 25, 2010).

Regarding the public relations strategy of using Governor Jindal to spread awareness, the researcher believed that spreading awareness was the public relations strategy and using

Governor Jindal was a public relations tactic. Macaluso felt they were a strategy. Macaluso said:

...The Governor and the governor's office recognize that [coastal restoration] is one of the most important things, and possibly the most important thing, that's going on, say south of Alexandria, [LA] and he and his staff want to be a part of making these announcements about project accomplishments as much as possible. (personal communication, January 25, 2010)

Macaluso went on to say that anytime Governor Jindal backed an issue, "It draws a lot of attention to [the issue], and that's good that public officials are starting to get it and understand" (personal communication, January 25, 2010). Macaluso discussed that this did not just pertain to local officials. Macaluso said:

I'm not just talking about the parish presidents from our coastal parishes, Terrebonne, Plaquemines. They understand it, but it's the growth up the chain to state government, to Congress, to the [Obama] administration. This presidential administration has actually responded a lot more so than some administrations in the past. (personal communication, January 25, 2010)

Macaluso also noted the importance of communication as a part of GOCA's public relations strategies and stated:

[Communication] is absolutely vital. We have to pacify the fears of the people who live in this great state. We have to convince the nation that we are worth investing in. We have to get our user groups with their different cultures and our stakeholders to have a common vision. It is essential to do this in a timely manner. We have to convince these publics that it's time to agree, resolve their differences and make them understand that this is something worth fighting for. (personal communication, January 25, 2010)

Macaluso described the tactics GOCA used to spread coastal erosion awareness through the issuance of press releases, interpersonal communication, and website updates. Macaluso also stated, "We've been fortunate from the coastal aspect that it's a really hot button issue at this point and that people pay a lot of attention to and a lot of money is dedicated to it" (personal communication, October 2, 2009).

Macaluso cited press releases, website management, brochures, public meetings, press conferences with Louisiana Governor Bobby Jindal, conferences, and distribution of educational materials to schools as public relations tactics. Macaluso also noted the creation of a monthly newsletter that is sent through email to a mailing list that interested parties may sign up for while visiting the CPRA's website. He said, "It's not that big of a deal, but at the same time, it can contain more anecdotal information; something that we wouldn't necessarily put in a press release" (personal communication, January 25, 2010). Regarding the brochures and educational materials, Macaluso said, "We've also done some brochures and we're shooting to do a coloring book, but unfortunately that has not developed to the point where I had hoped at this point, but I would like to get it done soon" (personal communication, January 25, 2010). This may be due to GOCA's reactive public information staff. Macaluso continued, "I've been working with a graphic designer and trying to get some ideas to get it out before the spring, around like Earth Day" (personal communication, January 25, 2010). Macaluso also noted that GOCA Director Garret Graves will speak at upcoming conferences about the engineering of coastal restoration.

Summary of In-depth Interviews

The coastal restoration organizations use various public relations strategies and tactics. From stakeholder engagement to media relations, the public relations practitioners implement the public relations strategies and tactics and building relationships with their publics in different ways.

The public relations strategies and tactics of AWF serve to build and maintain relationships, especially with their supporters like the oil and gas industry, and the coastal Louisiana community. To do this, AWF also supports America's Energy Coast and stressed the importance of Louisiana's oil and gas industry to state, national, and international audiences.

Additionally, AWF discussed the importance of promoting the education of coastal erosion. AWF realized that it needed to provide educational materials to children so they would understand the issue and in the future, act accordingly to save coastal Louisiana. They designed and implemented kid-friendly cartoon mascots to appeal to the children while teaching them the importance of coastal restoration. These mascots made special appearances at parades and also in media coverage. They also provided educational materials to schools to reach this younger audience. Finally, AWF stressed the importance of foundation and the campaign being known. The thought behind this public relations strategy was to make the AWF name recognizable in the coastal restoration community and synonymous with progress on spreading the word about coastal erosion. In doing so, AWF branded the foundation and campaign in an effort to further garner support for the issue of coastal erosion.

CRCL stressed the importance of advocacy, growing and maintaining the organization, and effective communication as public relations strategies. Though advocacy was important to the organization, the only communication CRCL has with the general public is through a voluntary sign-up listserv. This type of communication does not reach the whole public. Additionally, growing and maintaining the organization may be an important strategy for CRCL to implement in order for recognition and continued funding, but they neglect another important public relations strategy of growing and maintaining relationships with its publics. Without a communications director, CRCL feels limited in its public relations function.

GOCA's public relations strategy's included stakeholder engagement, media relations, and creating awareness of the issue of coastal erosion. These public relations strategies are furthered by GOCA's public relations tactics of using Governor Jindal as a spokesperson for coastal restoration, press conferences, press releases, and website management. GOCA's

reactive public relations strategies are the result of Macaluso performing all communications for two offices, GOCA and OCPR. The strategies themselves, however, do garner attention of the issue from the public, media, and other government officials. The lack of public relations tactics also resulted from the lack of communication staff. For example, hurricane season should not be the only time the public and media are concerned with coastal restoration. Other tactics may improve media coverage and public interest of the issue.

Content Analysis: Organizational Press Releases

To understand what messages the public relations practitioners disseminated, the researcher coded press releases from the three organizations. All press releases from AWF (n=102), CRCL (n=6), and GOCA (n=89) were coded from the time period of August 29, 2005 to August 29, 2009 with a total sample of 197 (n=197). AWF produced 102 press releases. AWF, established in 2002, uses Marmillion + Company to handle communication. Press releases from AWF dated from 2006 to 2009. CRCL produced six press releases. Press releases from CRCL dated from 2005 to 2007. GOCA produced 89 press releases. The press releases from GOCA began in 2006 and continue until 2009.

The most common attribute of the press releases was the government attribute, with the definition of appeals or lobbying to the President, Governor, state, or local officials or calls of action on the federal, state, and local parish levels, with 81.7 percent (See Table 13). The next most common attribute was the hurricane attribute with 68.0 percent. The engineering, culture, and economic effect attributes rounded out the top five with 48.2 percent, 46.7 percent, and 41.6 percent, respectively.

The least common attribute of all press releases was the ecotourism attribute with a considerably low 0.2 percent occurrence in press releases. Other low recordings among the attributes were the ports attribute at 11.2 percent and the philanthropy attribute at 11.7 percent.

Table 13.

Attributes Occurrence by Press Releases

Attribute Occurrence by Press Releases				
	AWF	CRCL	GOCA	All
	(n=102)	(n=6)	(n=89)	(n=197)
Cost	3 (2.9%)	4 (66.7%)	36 (40.4%)	43 (21.8%)
Culture	61 (59.8%)	4 (66.7%)	27 (30.3%)	92 (46.7%)
Economic effect	69 (67.6%)	2 (33.4%)	11 (12.4%)	82 (41.6%)
Ecotourism	3 (2.9%)	0 (0%)	1 (1.1%)	4 (0.2%)
Education	63 (61.8%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	63 (32.0%)
Engineering	14 (43.1%)	4 (66.7%)	77 (86.5%)	95 (48.2%)
Fisheries	30 (29.4%)	0 (0%)	12 (13.5%)	42 (21.3%)
Geology	28 (27.5%)	1 (16.7%)	18 (20.2%)	47 (23.9%)
Government	70 (68.6%)	6 (100%)	85 (95.5%)	161 (81.7%)
Hurricane	66 (64.7%)	5 (83.4%)	63 (70.8%)	134 (68.0%)
Oil and Gas	68 (66.7%)	1 (16.7%)	7 (7.9%)	76 (38.6%)
Philanthropy	23 (22.5%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	23 (11.7%)
Ports	18 (17.6%)	0 (0%)	4 (4.5%)	22 (11.2%)
Research	28 (27.5%)	1 (16.7%)	33 (37.1%)	62 (31.5%)
Shipping	9 (8.8%)	1 (16.7%)	19 (21.3%)	29 (14.7%)
Spotlight	54 (52.9%)	1 (16.7%)	3 (3.4%)	58 (29.4%)
Wildlife	47 (46.1%)	0 (0%)	4 (4.5%)	51 (25.9%)
Other	30 (29.4%)	0 (0%)	19 (21.3%)	49 (24.9%)

The other attribute occurred 24.9 percent as an attribute in the press releases. This number can be explained by announcements of meetings, such as an informational seminar taking place in New Orleans; mentions of other organizations, such as AWF's partnership with Women of the Storm; or meeting notes, such as GOCA's minutes from the last assembly.

Though the government attribute was the most common attribute in all press releases with 81.7 percent, the percentages among the different organizational press releases were not similar. CRCL used the government attribute in all of its press releases. GOCA used the government attribute in press releases 95.5 percent of the time. AWF, however, only mentioned the government attribute in 68.6 percent press releases.

AWF also neglects the cost attribute. CRCL used the cost attribute in its press releases 66.7 percent of the time, while the category appeared in GOCA's press releases 40.4 percent of the time. The cost attribute appeared in AWF press releases 2.9 percent of the time.

Similarly disproportionate is AWF's mentioning of the education attribute at 61.8 percent while neither CRCL nor GOCA use the education attribute in press releases. The education attribute's 32.0 percent total comes solely from AWF.

AWF also used the oil and gas industry attribute more than CRCL or GOCA. AWF had 66.7 percent of its press releases mention the oil and gas industry attribute, while CRCL mentioned it 16.7 percent of the time and GOCA only 7.9 percent of the time.

The wildlife attribute also appeared more times in AWF press releases than the other organizations. AWF mentioned the wildlife attribute in 46.1 percent of its press releases. CRCL, however, never mentioned the wildlife attribute and GOCA focused on the wildlife attribute in 4.5 percent of its press releases.

Finally, AWF also focused on the spotlight of an organization attribute more frequently than the other organizations. AWF mentioned the spotlight of an organization attribute 52.9 percent. CRCL mentioned the attribute in 16.7 percent of the press releases while GOCA only mentioned in the attribute in 3.4 percent of press releases.

RQ2: What coastal erosion messages are public relations practitioners trying to get to the public through the media?

To answer RQ2, the most common major attribute of all the press releases was also the government attribute with 19.3 percent. Following the government attribute was the other attribute with 15.2 percent of major attributes. The other attribute was a popular topic because many of the press releases dealt with announcing meeting dates and times for the organizations. Finishing out the top five major attributes were the engineering attribute with 12.7 percent, the research attribute with 11.2 percent and the education and the spotlight of an organization attributes tied with 9.1 percent (See Table 14).

Table 14.

Major Attributes of Press Releases

Major Attributes of Press Releases				
	AWF (n=102)	CRCL (n=6)	GOCA (n=89)	All (n=197)
Cost	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	2 (2.2%)	2 (1.0%)
Culture	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (1.1%)	1 (0.5%)
Economic effect	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Ecotourism	2 (1.9%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	2 (1.0%)
Education	18 (17.6%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	18 (9.1%)
Engineering	0 (0%)	1 (16.7%)	24 (26.9%)	25 (12.7%)
Fisheries	0 0%	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

(Table 14 continued)

Major Attributes of Press Releases				
	AWF	CRCL	GOCA	All
	(n=102)	(n=6)	(n=89)	(n=197)
Geology	1 (0.9%)	0 (0%)	2 (2.2%)	3 (1.5%)
Government	9 (8.8%)	4 (66.7%)	25 (28.1%)	38 (19.3%)
Hurricanes	7 (6.9%)	0 (0%)	4 (4.5%)	11 (5.6%)
Oil and Gas	14 (13.7%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	14 (7.1%)
Philanthropy	9 (8.8%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	9 (4.6%)
Ports	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Research	7 (6.9%)	0 (0%)	15 (16.9%)	22 (11.2%)
Shipping	0 (0%)	1 (16.7%)	2 (2.2%)	3 (1.5%)
Spotlight	18 (17.6%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	18 (9.1%)
Wildlife	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (1.1%)	1 (0.5%)
Other	17 (16.7%)	0 (0%)	13 (14.6%)	30 (15.2%)

Like the attribute occurrence findings, the use of major attribute findings had various similarities and differences between these organizations. Though some attribute occurrences may have been high, it does not mean that these themes served as the major attribute. Different organizations focused on different aspects of coastal erosion.

For example, similar with the attribute occurrence findings, AWF focused on the education attribute more than the other organizations with this category occurring as a major attribute in 17.6 percent of the press releases. Neither CRCL nor GOCA used the education attribute as a major attribute in any of the organizations' press releases.

AWF did not focus on the engineering attribute. This is different from the other organizations. CRCL used the engineering attribute as a major attribute 16.7 percent of the time. The engineering attribute occurred as a major attribute in GOCA's press releases 26.9 percent of the time.

CRCL focused on the government attribute more than the other organizations. CRCL used the government attribute as a major attribute in 66.7 percent of its press releases. AWF used this category 8.8 percent of the time. The government attribute occurred as a major attribute in 28.1 percent of GOCA's press releases.

Also similar to the findings in the attribute occurrence finding, AWF focused more on the oil and gas industry attribute than the other organizations. AWF used the oil and gas industry attribute as a major attribute in 13.7 percent of press releases. CRCL and GOCA never used the oil and gas industry attribute as a major attribute.

The same is true of the spotlight of an organization attribute. AWF used this attribute in 17.6 percent of its press releases, while the other organizations do not focus on the spotlight of an organization attribute as a major attribute.

Content Analysis: News Articles

To understand what messages the media was picking up and to determine if the media's messages were similar or different to the organizational press releases, news articles from local and national newspaper articles were also coded. The researcher coded articles containing the words "Louisiana and wetlands" and "Louisiana and coastal erosion" from local newspapers, *The Advocate* and *The Times-Picayune*, and a national newspaper, *The New York Times*, dating from August 29, 2005 to August 29, 2009. The researcher coded 88 articles from *The Advocate*, 143 articles from *The Times-Picayune*, and 51 articles from *The New York Times*.

The most common attribute in all of the newspaper articles was the hurricane attribute with 83.0 percent. The government attribute closely followed garnering 81.6 percent as the second most common attribute occurrence. The engineering attribute occurred 68.4 percent of the time, the cost attribute occurred in 54.3 percent of the newspaper articles, and the geology attribute occurred in 48.2 percent (See Table 15).

The least common attribute in all of the newspaper articles was the philanthropy attribute with occurrence in 3.2 percent of the articles. Ecotourism and education attributes tied with 5.0 percent, and the ports and wildlife attributes finished with 8.5 percent and 11.0 percent respectively.

Table 15.

Attribute Occurrence by News Articles

Attribute Occurrence by News Articles				
	<i>The Advocate</i>	<i>The Times-Picayune</i>	<i>The New York Times</i>	All
	(n=88)	(n=143)	(n=51)	(n=282)
Cost	43 (48.9%)	73 (51.0%)	37 (72.5%)	153 (54.3%)
Culture	15 (17.0%)	37 (25.9%)	21 (41.2%)	73 (25.9%)
Economic effect	11 (12.5%)	41 (28.7%)	12 (23.5%)	64 (22.7%)
Ecotourism	2 (2.3%)	9 (6.3%)	3 (5.9%)	14 (5.0%)
Education	5 (5.7%)	8 (5.6%)	1 (1.9%)	14 (5.0%)
Engineering	53 (60.2%)	108 (75.6%)	32 (62.7%)	193 (68.4%)
Fisheries	11 (12.5%)	31 (21.7%)	9 (17.6%)	51 (18.1%)
Geology	37 (42.0%)	76 (53.1%)	23 (45.1%)	136 (48.2%)
Government	74 (84.1%)	115 (80.4%)	41 (80.4%)	230 (81.6%)
Hurricane	63 (71.6%)	124 (86.7%)	47 (92.6%)	234 (83.0%)

(Table 15 continued)

Attribute Occurrence by News Articles				
	<i>The Advocate</i>	<i>The Times-Picayune</i>	<i>The New York Times</i>	All
	(n=88)	(n=143)	(n=51)	(n=282)
Oil and Gas	19 (21.6%)	47 (32.9%)	12 (23.5%)	78 (27.7%)
Philanthropy	3 (3.4%)	6 (4.2%)	0 (0%)	9 (3.2%)
Ports	5 (5.7%)	14 (9.8%)	5 (9.8%)	24 (8.5%)
Research	25 (28.4%)	7 (4.9%)	5 (9.8%)	37 (13.1%)
Shipping	11 (12.5%)	41 (28.7%)	13 (25.5%)	65 (23.0%)
Spotlight	7 (7.9%)	24 (16.9%)	1 (1.9%)	32 (11.3%)
Wildlife	6 (6.8%)	21 (14.7%)	4 (7.8%)	31 (11.0%)
Other	13 (14.7%)	14 (9.8%)	6 (11.8%)	33 (11.7%)

Looking at the local versus national media coverage, several findings are worth noting. *The New York Times* emphasized the cost attribute more than the local newspapers. *The New York Times* used the cost attribute in 72.5 percent of its stories, while *The Advocate* and *The Times-Picayune* focused on this attribute 48.9 percent and 51.0 percent respectively.

The New York Times also focused more on the culture attribute than the local newspapers. The culture attribute occurred 41.2 percent of *The New York Times*’ news articles compared to *The Advocate*’s 17.0 percent and *The Times-Picayune*’s 25.9 percent.

The hurricane attribute also ranked higher in *The New York Times* than among the local newspapers. The hurricane attribute occurred in 92.6 percent of news articles in *The New York Times*. *The Advocate* reported on the hurricane attribute 71.6 percent of the time. The hurricane attribute occurred in *The Times-Picayune* 86.7 percent of the time.

The New York Times also reported on the education and the philanthropy attributes at lower levels than the local newspapers. The education attribute occurred in *The New York Times* 1.9 percent of the time, compared to *The Advocate*'s 5.7 percent, and *The Times-Picayune*'s 5.6 percent. The philanthropy attribute was never an attribute in *The New York Times*' stories, while it occurred in *The Advocate* 3.4 percent and *The Times-Picayune* 4.2 percent of the time.

Differences between *The Times-Picayune* and *The Advocate* are also worth noting. *The Times-Picayune* focused more on the fisheries and wildlife attributes than *The Advocate*. The fisheries attribute occurred in 21.6 percent of *The Times-Picayune* articles compared to 12.5 percent in *The Advocate*. The wildlife attribute occurred in *The Times-Picayune* 14.7 percent of the time compared to *The Advocate*'s 6.8 percent. In both cases, *The New York Times* fell in the middle with 17.6 percent devoted to the fisheries attribute and 7.8 percent devoted to the wildlife attribute.

The Advocate focused more on the research attribute, with 28.4 percent, than the other newspapers. *The Times-Picayune* only reported on the research attribute in 4.9 percent of news articles, while *The New York Times* again fell somewhere in the middle. *The New York Times*' research attribute was 9.8 percent.

The Advocate did not focus on the shipping attribute as much as the other newspapers. The shipping attribute occurred in *The Advocate* in 12.5 percent of articles, compared to *The Times-Picayune* articles with 28.7 percent. In this case, *The New York Times* took after *The Times-Picayune* and reported on the shipping attribute in 25.5 percent of the articles.

Finally, *The Times-Picayune* focused on the spotlight of an organization attribute more than the other newspapers. The spotlight of an organization attribute occurred in 16.9 percent of

The Times-Picayune articles compared to 7.9 percent of *The Advocate*'s articles and 1.9 percent of *The New York Times*' articles.

The most common major attribute of all the newspaper articles was the government attribute with 22.7 percent. The engineering attribute followed with 18.4 percent. The hurricane attribute occurred 11.0 percent of the time, followed by the geology attribute with 8.2 percent. The spotlight of an organization attribute finished out the top five major attributes with 6.4 percent (See Table 16).

The least common major attribute of all the newspaper articles was the ecotourism attribute with zero occurrences. The philanthropy and ports attributes occurred 0.4 percent of the time. The education attribute occurred in 0.7 percent of articles and the fisheries attribute occurred in 1.8 percent.

Table 16.

Major Attributes of News Articles

Major Attributes of News Articles				
	<i>The Advocate</i>	<i>The Times -Picayune</i>	<i>The New York Times</i>	All
	(n=88)	(n=143)	(n=51)	(n=282)
Cost	1 (1.2%)	5 (3.5%)	3 (5.9%)	9 (3.2%)
Culture	2 (2.3%)	5 (3.5%)	4 (7.8%)	11 (3.9%)
Economic effect	2 (2.3%)	3 (2.1%)	1 (1.9%)	6 (2.1%)
Ecotourism	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Education	0 (0%)	2 (1.4%)	0 (0%)	2 (0.7%)
Engineering	15 (17.0%)	30 (21.0%)	7 (4.9%)	52 (18.4%)
Fisheries	1 (1.2%)	2 (1.4%)	2 (3.9%)	5 (1.8%)
Geology	8 (9.1%)	12 (8.4%)	3 (5.9%)	23 (8.2%)

(Table 16 continued)

Major Attributes of News Articles				
	<i>The Advocate</i>	<i>The Times -Picayune</i>	<i>The New York Times</i>	All
	(n=88)	(n=143)	(n=51)	(n=282)
Government	27 (30.7%)	23 (16.1%)	14 (27.5%)	64 (22.7%)
Hurricane	7 (7.9%)	17 (11.9%)	7 (13.7%)	31 (11.0%)
Oil and Gas	3 (3.4%)	9 (6.3%)	2 (3.9%)	14 (5.0%)
Philanthropy	0 (0%)	1 (0.7%)	0 (0%)	1 (0.4%)
Ports	0 (0%)	1 (0.7%)	0 (0%)	1 (0.4%)
Research	9 (10.2%)	1 (0.7%)	1 (1.9%)	11 (3.9%)
Shipping	0 (0%)	12 (8.4%)	2 (3.9%)	14 (5.0%)
Spotlight	6 (6.8%)	11 (7.8%)	1 (1.9%)	18 (6.4%)
Wildlife	1 (1.2%)	5 (3.5%)	2 (3.9%)	8 (2.8%)
Other	6 (6.8%)	4 (2.8%)	2 (3.9%)	12 (4.3%)

Like the news article attribute findings, the major attribute findings of newspaper articles also yielded results worth noting. *The New York Times* emphasized the cost attribute in 5.9 percent of news articles, compared to *The Advocate* with 1.2 percent and *The Times-Picayune* with 3.5 percent. *The New York Times* also emphasized the culture attribute more in 7.8 percent of articles compared to *The Advocate* with 2.3 percent and *The Times-Picayune* with 3.5 percent.

The New York Times reported on the engineering attribute as a major attribute less often than the local newspapers. The engineering attribute occurred as a major attribute in 4.9 percent of *The New York Times*' articles. *The Advocate* emphasized the engineering attribute in 17.0 percent of articles. Twenty-one percent of *The Times-Picayune*'s articles focused on the engineering attribute.

The Times-Picayune emphasized the shipping attribute more than the other newspapers as a major attribute. The shipping attribute occurred in *The Times-Picayune* 8.4 percent compared to zero percent in *The Advocate* and 3.9 percent in *The New York Times*.

The Advocate focused more on the research attribute than the other newspapers with 10.2 percent of major attributes. *The Times-Picayune* emphasized the research attribute in 0.7 percent of articles. The research attribute occurred as a major attribute in *The New York Times* 1.9 percent of the time.

The Advocate neglected the wildlife attribute as a major attribute and only occurred in 1.2 percent of *The Advocate*'s articles. *The Times-Picayune* and *The New York Times* focused on the wildlife attribute 3.5 percent and 3.9 percent respectively as a major attribute.

RQ3a: Are the media picking up the public relations practitioners' messages?

To answer RQ3a, a comparison was made between the major attributes of all the press releases versus the major attributes of all the newspaper stories (See Table 17). The results showed that in some cases, the media and the press releases had similar focuses, like the engineering, cost, and government, attributes, while in some cases very disproportionate like the education, other, research, and philanthropy attributes.

Table 17.

Comparison of Major Attributes of All Press Releases and All News Articles

Comparison of Major Attributes of All Press Releases and All News Articles		
	Major Attributes of All Press Releases	Major Attributes of All News Articles
	(n=197)	(n=282)
Cost	2 (1.0%)	9 (3.2%)
Culture	1 (0.5%)	11 (3.9%)
Economic effect	0 (0%)	6 (2.1%)

(Table 17 continued)

Comparison of Major Attributes of All Press Releases and All News Articles		
	Major Attributes of All Press Releases	Major Attributes of All News Articles
	(n=197)	(n=282)
Ecotourism	2 (1.0%)	0 (0%)
Education	18 (9.1%)	2 (0.7%)
Engineering	25 (12.7%)	52 (18.4%)
Fisheries	0 (0%)	5 (1.8%)
Geology	3 (1.5%)	23 (8.2%)
Government	38 (19.3%)	64 (22.7%)
Hurricane	11 (5.6%)	31 (11.0%)
Oil and Gas	14 (7.1%)	14 (5.0%)
Philanthropy	9 (4.6%)	1 (0.4%)
Ports	0 (0%)	1 (0.4%)
Research	22 (11.2%)	11 (3.9%)
Shipping	3 (1.5%)	14 (5.0%)
Spotlight	18 (9.1%)	18 (6.4%)
Wildlife	1 (0.5%)	8 (2.8%)
Other	30 (15.2%)	12 (4.3%)

In looking at the comparisons, several categories are disproportionate with higher percentages in the press release category. For example, the education attribute occurs in 9.1 percent of press releases and only 0.7 percent in news articles. The other attribute occurred as a major attribute in press releases 15.2 percent of the time, while only 4.3 percent in news articles. The research attribute occurred in 11.2 percent of press releases' major attribute compared to 3.9

percent of news articles. The philanthropy attribute was also highlighted more in press releases at 4.6 percent compared to news articles' 0.4 percent.

Conversely, news articles also had higher percentages in the major attribute category that differed from the press releases' major themes. The culture attribute appeared more times in news stories with 3.9 percent than in press releases with only 0.5 percent. News stories focused more on the geology attribute as a major attribute with 22.7 percent compared to press releases with 1.5 percent. The hurricane attribute also occurred more in news articles with 11.0 percent compared to press releases with 5.6 percent. News stories also focused more on the engineering attribute with 18.4 percent compared to press releases at 12.7 percent. Though it is low, news articles focused on the economic effect attribute with 2.1 percent than press releases, which did not emphasize this category at all.

Several press releases and newspaper articles have similar major attributes. The ports attribute is included in this category with 0.4 percent difference, except it is important to note that the ports attribute received barely any coverage in either category. The same is true for the fisheries attribute with only 1.8 percent difference and the education attribute with a 1.0 percent difference.

RQ3b: What types of coastal erosion messages are the media attending to?

To answer RQ3b, 69.9 percent of news articles were considered hard news. This means that news about coastal erosion is driven more toward the average viewer who is interested in public affairs information, not the marginal viewer, who only occasionally pays attention to public affairs information. The additional 30.1 percent were considered soft news. This finding has implications for the newspaper findings. Most of the common attributes and major themes, such as the hurricane, government, engineering, cost, and geology attributes, exhibit hard news

characteristics. Interestingly, the spotlight of an organization attribute also appeared in the top five major themes of newspaper articles, contradicting the typical hard news option.

Again, it is important to understand what types of messages the media are attending to in order for public relations practitioners to understand how they may better reach the media. If the public relations practitioners realize that the media focus more on hard news stories than soft news stories, the public relations practitioners should tailor their messages to have a hard news edge in order to reach the media and have the media adopt their message.

RQ4: Compared to communication output, what organization receives the most media coverage of its messages?

RQ4 examined the credibility of the coastal restoration organization under study to find out the media's most used source for information. Most of the news articles, 97.8 percent, used a source other than or in combination with the three organizations in this study, AWF, CRCL, or GOCA. These organizations were sources for two of the three newspapers (See Table 18).

Table 18.

News Article Source by Coastal Restoration Organization

News Article Source by Coastal Restoration Organization				
	<i>The Advocate</i>	<i>The Times-Picayune</i>	<i>The New York Times</i>	All
	(n=88)	(n=143)	(n=51)	(n=282)
AWF	4 (4.5%)	20 (13.9%)	0 (0%)	24 (8.5%)
CRCL	5 (5.7%)	6 (4.2%)	0 (0%)	11 (3.9%)
GOCA	21 (23.7%)	19 (13.3%)	0 (0%)	40 (14.2%)

GOCA was cited the most in the newspaper articles with 14.2 percent. AWF followed and was cited 8.5 percent of the time. CRCL was the least cited with 3.9 percent. One reason

for GOCA's many citations could have resulted from the hard news stories and the fact that most of the stories dealt with government, engineering, and hurricanes.

The Times-Picayune cited AWF the most in 13.9 percent of its articles. *The Advocate* cited GOCA the most with 23.7 percent. *The New York Times*, however, never used AWF, CRCL, and GOCA as sources of information.

After examining the quotes by AWF, CRCL, and GOCA used by *The Advocate* and *The Times-Picayune* (See Appendix O), the researcher found that none of the quotes came directly from the press releases. This indicates that, if the media want to use these organizations as a source, the media directly contact these organizations to gain information, rather than simply relying on quotes from press releases.

Summary of Results

Public relations practitioners at AWF, CRCL, and GOCA face many challenges when communicating with their publics on the issue of coastal erosion. All agree that communication is essential to spreading each organization's message and fulfilling each organization's mission. Though the organizations have some similar public relations strategies, they use different tactics to communicate with their publics. These strategies and tactics determine the effectiveness of communication with the organizations' publics.

The public relations practitioners use many tactics to spread their message. This thesis systematically investigated the tactic of press releases. As one of the most important public relations tactic, the researcher found that major attributes of the press releases were the government, other, engineering, research, education, and spotlight of an organization attributes. Because media relations also played an important role for the public relations practitioners, this thesis also systematically investigated the messages the media covered. Some of the major

attributes found in the press releases, such as the government, engineering, and spotlight of an organization attributes, matched the newspaper articles' major attributes. The newspaper articles focused more on the hurricane and geology attributes and less on the education attribute. The newspaper articles also focused on the hard news aspects of coastal erosion.

GOCA was the most cited organization in the newspaper articles, followed by AWF and CRCL. It is important to note that the three organizations were never used as a source of information for *The New York Times*. The researcher also did not find any use of press release quotes in the sampled newspaper articles.

CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION

The results of the in-depth interviews and content analyses of press releases and news articles provide relevant information for public relations practitioners attempting to spread the word about the damage coastal erosion causes to the state of Louisiana and the long-term effects to both Louisiana and the nation as a whole.

Return to Theory

Many of the coastal restoration public relations practitioners' current public relations strategies and tactics related back to public relations theories and accepted practices, even if they were not aware that what they were doing was public relations.

Four Models of Public Relations. As with all public relations goals, coastal restoration public relations practitioners must focus on building relationships with the organizations' publics. To do this, public relations practitioners must establish two-way symmetrical communication with its publics. By involving the public in the fight against coastal erosion, the public relations practitioners will learn the publics' concerns and may more fully address these concerns. Based on the communication with the publics, the researcher can classify the three coastal restoration organizations into one of Grunig and Hunt's (1984) four models of public relations.

AWF operates in a two-way symmetrical model. The organization communicates with its publics in effective ways. One of AWF's biggest publics is the oil and gas industry. By promoting the oil and gas industry's benefits to the country, the organization serves this public. The organization also wanted to really connect to its national audience. Ragusa noted that America's WETLAND was "a term coined through focus groups to try and name the region, so the nation would feel a sense of ownership because someone in Wisconsin might not care"

(personal communication, October 9, 2009). Ragusa also notes the partnerships with “like-minded” organizations, such as Restore or Retreat, as a way to reach out and get connected with the community (personal communication, October 9, 2009). AWF reaches out to its younger publics through the use of the AWF mascots, The Estuarrians (Ragusa, personal communication, October 9, 2009).

GOCA operates in a two-way symmetrical model. Though GOCA’s communication staff is limited, engaging the stakeholders and communicating with them has become an important part of the office’s role in the fight against coastal erosion. GOCA holds public meetings to listen to the public (Macaluso, personal communication, October 2, 2009). Macaluso also stated, “Sometimes, it’s just a matter of answering the phone and talking with someone about a project for an hour and a half to two hours,” (personal communication, October 2, 2009). Macaluso also described two-way symmetrical communication in environmental scanning, “I...go to public meetings to get a pulse on what the public is saying” (personal communication, October 2, 2009).

CRCL operates in the two-way asymmetric model. CRCL wants the public to accept its information and support the organization, however, CRCL does little to communicate with its publics. Mass emails and opinion letters in local newspapers do not create a two-way dialogue between the organization and its publics. Though CRCL discusses its publics and how the organization hopes to communicate with its publics, the organization falls short with communication practices recorded by the researcher.

These public relations practitioners should focus on cultivating and maintaining relationships with their publics as an essential part of the communication process. Returning to Grunig’s situational theory, it is essential that these organizations segment their publics and plan

different strategies to communicate with them (Grunig, 2006). These organizations each have different ways of connecting to the publics.

Communication Manager vs. Technician. Dozier (1984) and Smith (2005) discussed the importance for public relations practitioners to take on a managerial role in an organization rather than act as a technician. This study revealed that Peyronnin and Macaluso served their organizations as managers, while Ragusa took on more of a technical role for AWF. This technical role may be attributed to the fact that AWF hired out its communication and public relations functions to the Marmillion + Company, where Ragusa served as an account supervisor.

Strategic Public Relations Communication. Grunig et al. (1992) and Smith (2005) offer models of strategic public relations. Similarities include research, environmental scanning, establishing strategies and tactics, implementation, and research evaluation. AWF and GOCA, to some extent, have a strategic communication plan. CRCL hopes to develop strategic communications. Noble described a basic strategic plan for AWF that is refreshed every three years (personal communication, January 27, 2010). She also described that while public relations practitioners must follow their strategic plans, they also must be flexible (personal communication, January 27, 2010). Peyronnin described a communication goal for CRCL was a to design and maintain a communication strategy and evaluate the communication (personal communication, November 4, 2009). Macaluso at GOCA noted the Louisiana's Master Plan as a comprehensive research guide (personal communication, October 2, 2009). The Master Plan also outlined strategies and tactics, though not solely communication or public relations strategies and tactics.

Public Relations Strategies and Tactics. The public relations strategies discussed in this thesis include persuasion, media relations, community relations, employee relations,

governmental relations, international relations, and stakeholder engagement. Though the coastal restoration public relations practitioners may use a different name for what they are doing, all of their public relations strategies fall into these strategy categories.

Both Ragusa and Macaluso described one of AWF and GOCA's public relations strategies as stakeholder engagement (Macaluso, personal communication, January 27, 2010; Ragusa, personal communication, October 9, 2009). Returning to Grunig et al. (1992), stakeholder engagement involved segmenting publics and resolving issues through interaction of the organization with the public through symmetrical communication. Ragusa described AWF's public relations tactic to achieve stakeholder engagement was the development of relationships with similar organizations (personal communication, October 9, 2009). Ragusa said, "We've done a great job with developing relationships with like-minded organizations with the same values in terms of saving Louisiana's coast" (personal communication, October 9, 2009). AWF also segments its publics included focusing on educating children. AWF even uses mascots, The Estuarians, to cultivate relationships with these children. (This is also an example of community relations, which will be discussed later.) Macaluso described that GOCA's stakeholder engagement tactics included circulating information through the website and at public meetings (personal communication, October 2, 2009). He also noted that sometimes to facilitate two-way symmetrical communication, he engaged in interpersonal communication. Macaluso said, "Sometimes, it's just a matter of answering the phone and talking with someone about a project for an hour and a half or two hours," (personal communication, October 2, 2009).

All of the coastal restoration organizations focused on the public relations strategy of media relations, even if it was not specified within their self-proclaimed strategies. Wilcox et al. (2000) described media relations as a strategy that builds relationships with printed, spoken,

visual, and online media in an effort to disseminate a message. AWF seemed like the least concerned organization in regards to media relations. Noble noted AWF used op-ed pieces as a tactic for media relations (personal communication, January 27, 2010). Peyronnin described that CRCL needed the media to effectively communicate with its publics on policy and use the media to gain a pulse on public opinion (personal communication, November 4, 2009). Peyronnin said, “We need the media presence to communicate to raise the profile of the organization and affect policy with decision makers by saying we have the public opinion voice” (personal communication, November 4, 2009). Peyronnin described his use of the media, but did not go into detail on how CRCL maintained a relationship with the media. Macaluso specifically cited media relations as a GOCA public relations strategy. Macaluso noted that he did interviews and was in the process of filming some B-roll, which is background images for television news broadcasts, so it would be readily available to the media (personal communication, January 25, 2010). Macaluso described the importance of being a source to the media. Macaluso said:

... We want the media to come to us. If Garland Robinette does a talk show on [radio station] WWL, I don’t want him asking [the head of Lake Pontchartrain Basin Foundation] Carlton Dufrechou how the state should spend this money. I want him asking us. (personal communication, January 25, 2010)

All of the coastal restoration organizations utilize the governmental relations public relations strategy. Wilcox et al. (2000) described governmental relations as a strategy that builds relationships with local, state, and federal government agencies by gathering information and creating dialog for mutual benefit. All the organizations relied on governmental relations because coastal restoration needed engineering and funding. Ragusa noted that AWF needed to get public attention of the issue of coastal restoration in order to gain federal support (personal communication, November 4, 2009). Ragusa said, “If people don’t recognize the problem and how it affects them, then it’s not as likely you will get federal support” (personal

communication, November 4, 2009). Noble added that organizations partnered with AWF, such as Women of the Storm, went to Washington, D.C. and brought the issues to the Legislature and Congress (personal communication, January 27, 2010). AWF seemed to focus on the federal relationships and would benefit from establishing local and state governmental relationships. Peyronnin discussed that CRCL's governmental relations strategy was advocacy (personal communication, November 4, 2009). CRCL worked directly with the state of Louisiana to establish coastal restoration laws. Peyronnin said, "We work with state, parishes, and federal agencies, and Congress on policy and authorizations and legal action to put in place programs and actions that will restore coastal Louisiana" (personal communication, November 4, 2009). Peyronnin also stated that CRCL advocated on the local, state, and federal levels (personal communication, November 4, 2009). Macaluso, as a government employee, discussed GOCA's relationship with local, state, and federal administrations on coastal erosion and coastal restoration. Macaluso said of the OCPR, "We put projects on the ground and work day by day with the USACE, levee districts, [and] with the fish and wildlife service" (personal communication, October 2, 2009). Macaluso said of GOCA, "GOCA...goes to Congress and the legislature, ...the higher ups at the USACE, and the governor" (personal communication, October 2, 2009). As an office of the governor, GOCA performed governmental relations daily.

AWF and GOCA also described community relations, though neither public relations practitioner listed community relations in their public relations strategies. Wilcox et al. (2000) noted that community relations seeks to build relationships with the community, develop a dialogue, listen, and monitor emerging issues. AWF described The Estuarians as a community relations tactic. AWF traveled with The Estuarians to parades and children recognized them. Ragusa said, "They are happy to see them and happy for the work we're doing. People are

happy because the work we do is close to them” (personal communication, November 4, 2009). Ragusa also listed promotion of education as a public relations strategy. This included distributing educational materials to school children and engaging them in topics such as “Wetlands Week” (personal communication, November 4, 2009). What Ragusa described fell into the community relations public relations strategy. Macaluso described GOCA’s public meetings and developing educational materials for children and classrooms. Like AWF, this GOCA activity also fell into the community relations public relations strategy. Macaluso also noted GOCA wanted to do more community relations, such as expos on Earth Day (personal communication, January 25, 2010).

Though AWF does not specifically list it, the organization also performs international relations. Wilcox et al. (2000) noted that this public relations strategy involves seeking to establish mutually beneficial relationships with publics from other nations. AWF noted how it wants to bring the coastal erosion message to a national audience and partnership with the World Delta Dialogue. Louisiana and the World Delta Dialogue face a similar situation of coastal erosion in deltaic regions. Ragusa said, “We have partnered with the World Delta Dialogue [and the Netherlands] ...[and] are trying to make the Mississippi River Delta the center for all things delta in the world” (personal communication, November 4, 2009). By establishing a partnership with this organization, AWF uses international relations as a public relations strategy.

GOCA listed “Build awareness using Governor Bobby Jindal” as a public relations strategy. The researcher believed this to be a public relations tactic, not strategy. This tactic may fulfill a number of different strategies including governmental relations, community relations, persuasion, and media relations assuming that these different publics have a positive image of Governor Jindal. As a person of interest, Governor Jindal attracts news media attention

with appearances and speeches at press conferences and quoted material in press releases.

Macaluso said, “Anytime you put his [Jindal’s] face in front of it, it draws a lot of attention to it, and that’s good...” (personal communication, January 25, 2009). Smith (2005) discussed that politicians are not always used as spokespersons “because they often have as many foes as they have supporters” (p. 126). While this may be true, Governor Jindal has made it known that he supports coastal restoration and hurricane protection efforts and wants federal funding to aid in the restoration (Grissett, 2009).

AWF listed “Brand AWF and AWC” as a public relations strategy. This may fall under the public relations strategy of persuasion. Wilcox et al. (2000) described persuasion as changing or neutralizing hostile opinions, conserving favorable opinions, and appealing to self-interest. AWF appealed to self-interest by favorably framing its largest sponsor, Shell Oil. By crafting press releases that highlight the importance of the oil and gas industry on Louisiana and the nation, AWF attempted to persuade its different publics that Louisiana is worth saving and that coastal erosion destroys the oil and gas industry. Ragusa said, “...Louisiana, Texas, Mississippi, and Alabama ...have similar vulnerabilities and fuel the nation. A large portion of the country’s energy comes from this area” (personal communication, November 4, 2009). Persuasion does not create two-way symmetrical communication.

Framing. Framing the message is an important part of disseminating the coastal erosion message. Hallahan (1999) discussed the inclusion, exclusion, and emphasis on certain issues. Additionally, Hallahan (1999) noted the importance of framing the issue in a way that would be favorably received while reinforcing the message’s intent.

Many of the tactics from the coastal restoration organizations focused on garnering media attention. To do so, the messages may either appeal to logos, logic and reason, or pathos,

emotions (Smith, 2005). To appeal to logic and reason, the press releases, press conferences, and other news coverage must portray the issue of coastal erosion as needing urgent attention, the negative economic effects associated with coastal erosion, and the possible solutions to the issue. To have emotional appeal, the messages to the media must focus on the loss of culture with continued coastal erosion.

The press releases from AWF, CRCL, and GOCA framed the coastal erosion issue mostly in terms of the government, hurricane, engineering, and economic effect attributes (See Table 13). These categories are fairly surprising results. The government and engineering attributes, however, were neglected by AWF more so than the other organizations. AWF also gave the economic effect attribute its high percent with more than double the occurrences in CRCL's press releases and more five times the occurrences in GOCA's press releases. One reason for AWF's high use of the economic effect attribute in its press releases may relate to its business supporters, such as Shell Oil ("Our Partners," 2010). Overall, the public relations practitioners seem to use what Smith (2005) referred to as logos, or rational appeals, to their publics through the use of these attributes. Press releases with the government, hurricane, engineering, and economic effect attributes should easily translate into hard news topics for the media.

The researcher was surprised that more occurrences of the philanthropy attribute were not present (See Table 13). The researcher expected to find press releases that highlighted the organization's good deeds. Discussing philanthropy would be an easy way for an organization's press release to boost that organization's image. AWF was the only organization highlighting the philanthropy attribute in its press releases. AWF also focused more on the spotlight of an organization attribute than the other organizations. This suggests that AWF's press releases tend

to have a more soft news appeal and is concerned with promoting the organization and the organization's agenda.

The other attribute's unusually high numbers can be attributed to different announcements in the press releases. For example, AWF mentioned the other attribute in 29.4 percent of press releases (See Table 13). AWF has a partnership with different organizations, such as Women of the Storm, the Coast Guardians, America's Energy Coast, and others ("History," 2010). Press releases from AWF include mentions about these different organizations, such "Women of the Storm Return to Capitol Hill: 130+ Louisiana Women Make Urgent Call on Congress to Save National Asset" ("AWF Press Releases," 2010). Similarly, GOCA's press releases were categorized with the other attribute 21.3 percent of the time. GOCA announced many meetings in its press releases, including "State Coastal Officials Hold Public Meeting July 28 in Lake Charles on Reforming Corps of Engineers" ("News Room," 2010).

The major attribute of the press releases focused on the other attribute (See Table 14). As previously explained, most press releases dealt with organizational partnerships, meeting dates, or agenda notes. Depending on each specific press release will determine the news value, either hard or soft news, and if the media picked up the announcement.

Another popular major attribute of all press releases was the government attribute (See Table 14). CRCL and GOCA primarily focused on this category, while AWF had a low occurrence of the government attribute as a major theme. The reason for the high percentage of the government attribute in CRCL's press releases may be due in part to CRCL's lobbying and advocate functions. Peyronnin noted, "We work with state, parishes, federal agencies, and Congress on policy and authorizations and legal action to put in place programs and actions that

will restore coastal Louisiana” (personal communication, November 4, 2009). By addressing the government, CRCL serves its function to lobby for coastal restoration.

GOCA addresses the government attribute for an obvious reason; GOCA is a state office. Macaluso described GOCA’s role as policy makers and the OCPR’s role as the implementation arm that planned and executed coastal restoration projects (personal communication, October 2, 2009). GOCA must deal with the federal government and the USACE (Macaluso, personal communication, October 2, 2009). The press releases from this organization focus on the government attribute because it is part of the government.

Similarly, GOCA also focused on the engineering attribute more than any other organization (See Table 14). GOCA and OCPR plan for future engineering projects and must deal with positive or negative attitudes about completed projects (Macaluso, personal communication, October 2, 2009). Macaluso stated, “We have completely restored and rebuilt two barrier islands on our coast this year...and we are starting work on another one [where] we are going to rebuild two plus miles of beaches and dunes and 500 acres of marsh” (Macaluso, personal communication, October 2, 2009). Macaluso also mentioned that at times the OCPR partnered with the USACE, which would require press releases about the partnership and the future engineering projects (personal communication, October 2, 2009).

As a total percentage, the education attribute only ranks at 9.1 percent (See Table 14). Further examination, however, revealed the whole of this percentage comes from press releases by AWF. AWF focused more on the education attribute, because as Ragusa mentioned, children are the future and by learning about this issue, AWF hopes to continue coastal restoration efforts. Ragusa stated, “[Students] will pick up the torch about saving the coast as they get older, so it’s important we reach them now” (personal communication, October 9, 2009). Additionally,

Ragusa noted the mission of AWF is “to raise awareness and increase efforts to support and save coastal Louisiana, and to educate people of the problem” (personal communication, October 9, 2009). AWF fulfilled its mission by disseminating press releases with the education attribute.

GOCA and CRCL’s decision not to focus on the education attribute in press releases could be due to a number of reasons. GOCA, while wanting to do more public outreach, concedes to staff limitations (Macaluso, personal communication, October 2, 2009). Macaluso did note that materials were being printed for educational purposes. With GOCA using this new tactic, Macaluso may begin to write press releases and putting more information out about GOCA’s educational function. CRCL focused more on advocacy than education. CRCL may feel that its publics already know the issue and CRCL can focus on achieving other communication goals rather than education and awareness. On the other hand, CRCL may have educational and awareness strategies and tactics not revealed to the researcher.

AWF also was the only organization to have a major attribute of the oil and gas industry attribute with 13.7 percent (See Table 14). This may be due to the fact that AWF is partnered with America’s Energy Coast (“History,” 2009). America’s Energy Coast is an initiative of AWF that serves to bring different organizations and businesses together to realize the importance of Louisiana, Texas, Mississippi, and Alabama to the nation in terms of the economic effects of the loss of production of fuel, oil, and gas in this region (“Overview,” 2010). Ragusa also offered an explanation for why many of AWF’s press releases focused on the oil and gas industry attribute saying, “A large portion of the country’s energy comes from this area... We try to brand these four states so we have a louder voice when we try to get federal and national attention” (personal communication, October 9, 2009). AWF’s sponsors are also members of the oil and gas community (“Sponsors,” 2010). AWF’s sponsors include Shell Oil, Chevron, British

Gas, CITGO, ConocoPhillips, and ExxonMobil (“Sponsors,” 2010). In an attempt to appeal to its sponsors’ interests, AWF focuses a large part of its organizational communication efforts on this industry.

Similar to the press release attribute findings, AWF focused more on the philanthropy and spotlight of an organization attributes more than the other coastal restoration organizations. The philanthropy attribute press releases, such as “Nine Louisiana Students Win Wetlands Grants For Their Schools,” highlighted AWF’s community outreach and the benefits to different communities (“AWF Press Releases, 2009). Ragusa noted that all of AWF’s communication “leading up to an event is promotion” (personal communication, October 9, 2009). This may be the reason the spotlight of an organization attribute occurred as a major theme so many times in AWF’s press releases.

Overall, the press releases from CRCL and GOCA exhibited hard news characteristics. The press releases focused on coastal erosion using rational appeals to the organizations’ publics. Attention to the government and engineering attributes should make these organizations popular sources of information for media when covering the issue of coastal erosion.

What Makes the News. Hamilton (2004) discussed the decline of hard news to soft news coverage of newspapers in the United States due to economic pressures. While this may be true, the hot button issue of coastal erosion remains a hard news issue.

After examining news articles from *The Advocate*, *The Times-Picayune*, and *The New York Times*, the major attributes of news articles tended to exhibit more hard news characteristics. Hard news characteristics include issues that are require more effort on the part of the journalist, and appeal to readers or viewers that actively seek news about public affairs (Hamilton, 2004). For example, the engineering attribute of coastal erosion projects may only

appeal to the reader that actively pursues news on coastal erosion and coastal restoration projects. The marginal reader would not spend as much time reading these articles. Additionally, the economic effect attribute requires in-depth reporting on the part of the journalist. Though as a major theme the economic effect attribute in newspaper articles is higher than in press releases, AWF frequently used the economic effect attribute in press releases.

In the newspaper articles from *The Advocate*, *The Times-Picayune*, and *The New York Times*, the most common attribute was the hurricane attribute with 83.0 percent of the occurrences (See Table 15). *The New York Times* reported on the hurricane attribute the most out of the three newspapers, with *The Times-Picayune* and *The Advocate* following respectively. The hurricane attribute could be more popular to the national news because only when a hurricane is approaching, does the national news media remember the issue of coastal erosion. Macaluso explained his view of the national media saying, “Unfortunately, I think national media exposure deals specifically, with the nature of national television, key word stuff: Katrina, levees, 9th Ward” (personal communication, October 2, 2009). One reason *The Times-Picayune* may have focused on the hurricane attribute more than *The Advocate* is because more of *The Times-Picayune* readers, living in the Greater New Orleans Area, were affected by Hurricane Katrina, which hit the Greater New Orleans Area, than *The Advocate*’s readers, living in the Baton Rouge area.

The government attribute followed the hurricane attribute in newspaper article occurrence (See Table 15). The government attribute was reported highest in *The Advocate*, though this percentage, 84.1 percent, does not significantly differ from the other newspapers, both at 80.4 percent. The government attribute appeared because of the important role the government played and continues to play in coastal restoration.

The engineering attribute follows the government attribute with a total percentage of 68.4 percent of news stories. *The Times-Picayune* reported the highest percentage of the engineering attribute stories with 75.6 percent. One reason may be due to the extensive engineering projects and work being done in the Southeastern Louisiana area. These projects would directly affect *The Times-Picayune's* readers. *The Advocate* only reported the engineering attribute in 60.2 percent of news stories, which was the lowest recorded newspaper instance. The researcher would expect *The Advocate* to show more interest in the projects put on the ground by governmental bodies, such as OCPR, located in the capital.

The cost attribute ranked next among news story attributes with 54.3 percent. *The Advocate* and *The Times-Picayune* reported similarly about the cost of coastal erosion with 48.9 percent and 51.0 percent respectively. *The New York Times*, however, reported on the cost attribute in 72.5 percent of news stories. This may have negative effects for the coastal restoration public relations practitioners. If the national media only focuses on the negative aspects of coastal restoration for the nation, the cost, and not the benefits, such as lower gas prices due to hurricane protection projects, protected wildlife, and lower prices from commercial fishermen on shrimp and other products, the nation may be less willing to help Louisiana fight the coastal erosion battle.

The New York Times also focused more on the culture attribute with 41.2 percent stories using this attribute. This percentage is larger than *The Advocate* and *The Times-Picayune* reported instances of the culture attribute with 17.0 percent and 25.9 percent respectively. The culture attribute could play favorably as news coverage for the coastal restoration public relations practitioners. With the national media focused on the people affected by coastal

erosion, the public relations practitioners may use pathos, or emotional appeals, to attract national attention to the issue (Smith, 2005).

Different from the news article attributes, the major theme of all the news articles was the government attribute with 22.7 percent. *The Times-Picayune* is surprising lower than *The Advocate* and *The New York Times* in reporting the government attribute as a major theme. *The Times-Picayune* reported the government attribute as a major theme in 16.1 percent of news stories compared to 30.7 percent and 27.5 percent by *The Advocate* and *The New York Times*. One reason for the low government attribute occurrence as a major attribute in *The Times-Picayune* could be because *The Times-Picayune* chose to focus more on the engineering rather than the political conflicts regarding the coastal erosion issue.

The hurricane attribute came in as the second major attribute for news articles with 11.0 percent. The hurricane attribute was most popular in *The New York Times* with 13.7 percent. This may be due to the fact that the national media does not pay attention to coastal erosion until a visible reminder, like a hurricane, poses to strike the Gulf Coast. *The Advocate* used the hurricane attribute as a major theme 7.9 percent of the time and *The Times-Picayune* focused on the hurricane attribute 11.9 percent.

The engineering attribute followed the hurricane attribute with a total of 18.1 percent. *The Times-Picayune* and *The Advocate* focused similarly on the engineering attribute with 17.0 percent and 21.0 percent respectively. *The New York Times*, however, only used the engineering attribute as a major theme in 4.9 percent of news articles. Though the national media may not see the importance of reporting on coastal restoration projects, reporting on the engineering projects could show the nation all of the effort and hard work the Gulf Coast and Louisiana are putting into solving this issue. If the national audience could see how important Louisiana and its

residents take the situation, they may be more likely to get involved with coastal restoration efforts.

The remaining major attributes percentages begin a rapid decline. The geology attribute ranked as the fourth most popular major theme among newspaper articles with a total of 8.2 percent. *The Advocate* reported on the geology attribute in 9.1 percent of news articles, *The Times-Picayune* followed with 8.4 percent, and *The New York Times* ended the category with 5.9 percent. The geology attribute may be a more important major theme for the local newspapers because as geology affects coastal erosion, the local newspapers report on it as it happens and reports on possible speculation on geologic processes affecting coastal erosion, compared to the national newspaper, which might wait until significant geologic findings can be proven.

The shipping attribute occurred as a major attribute in 5.0 percent of news articles. *The Advocate*, however, never used the shipping attribute as a major attribute, compared to *The Times-Picayune* with 8.4 percent. This may be due to articles regarding the Mississippi River Gulf Outlet, or MR-GO. A judge ruled that the USACE's management and maintenance of MR-GO was responsible for the flooding in St. Bernard Parish and the Lower 9th Ward after Hurricane Katrina (Schleifstein, 2009). *The Times-Picayune's* readers may have demanded more information on the shipping industry than other newspaper readers because it directly affected personal interests and *The Times-Picayune* delivered.

The spotlight of an organization attribute occurred as a major attribute in 6.4 percent of newspaper articles. The philanthropy attribute, however, only occurred as a major attribute in 0.7 percent of newspaper articles. This finding intrigued the researcher because it appears that the newspapers are more interested in who is doing something rather than what they are doing.

Public Relations and the News Media: The Connection. Returning to the relationship between public relations practitioner and journalist revealed that public relations practitioners need the media to disseminate mass messages, while the media need the public relations practitioners as sources (Gower, 2007; Larrison, 2009). If the media, however, blindly accept the public relations practitioners spin on certain information, democracy could be affected because the public does not receive all relevant information needed to make informed decisions.

In an attempt to understand if the news media are picking up the messages that the public relations practitioners are disseminating in press releases, the researcher compared press releases and newspaper article major attributes. Several categories were disproportionate. The press releases categories that were a higher percentage than newspaper articles included the education, other, research, and philanthropy attributes. Newspaper articles focused more on the culture, geology, hurricane, engineering, and economic effects attributes than the press releases.

For the most part, the press releases with higher percentage categories than the newspaper articles tended to be categories that could be associated with soft news. For example, press releases with the education attribute major theme focused on exposing Louisiana school children to the wetlands or announced the winner of a local art contest that exhibited characteristics learned from an organization's presentation. The philanthropy attribute press releases also more likely highlighted good deeds by the organizations rather than focus on public affairs issues. The research attribute may fit into this press release category because the organizations are trying to highlight the good that they are contributing to the field of coastal erosion study. The reason that the newspapers may not focus on these attributes as much may be due to the fact that coastal erosion is such a hot button issue in Louisiana and that the national media does take the issue seriously.

In an effort to determine source credibility, possibly from the three coastal restoration organizations, the researcher examined the sources used by *The Advocate*, *The Times-Picayune* and *The New York Times*. *The Advocate* and *The Times-Picayune* cited GOCA the most with a total of 14.2 percent (See Table 18). This may be because coastal erosion is such a hot button issue with many players. Some of the most important players include government officials. Since GOCA is the only governmental agency studied in this thesis, it becomes obvious that the media trust the governmental sources more on issues of coastal erosion than non-governmental agencies like AWF and CRCL.

AWF followed as a source in all of the newspaper coverage with 8.5 percent. *The Times-Picayune* used AWF as source more with 13.9 percent compared to *The Advocate* with 4.5 percent. This may be due to the fact that AWF is located in New Orleans and most of its activities and promotions take place in that area. It becomes more newsworthy to *The Times-Picayune* than to *The Advocate*.

CRCL ranked last among all of the newspaper sources with 3.9 percent. This may be due to CRCL's lack of press releases as a communication tool to reach journalists and the media. *The Advocate* cited CRCL slightly more than *The Times-Picayune* with 5.7 percent and 4.2 percent respectively. This may be due to the fact that *The Advocate* focused more of its news stories on government than *The Times-Picayune* and due to CRCL's lobbying function, *The Advocate* picked up CRCL as a source.

The New York Times never used any of the coastal restoration organizations as a source of information. Instead, *The New York Times* used sources like a researcher from the National Academy of Science, a coastal scientist at the University of Maine, a researcher with the United States Geological Survey, a coastal scientist and an environmental studies professor at the

University of New Orleans, the Biloxi-Chitimacha Native American tribal chief, a *Times-Picayune* reporter, The Nature Conservancy, an engineering professor and geologist at Louisiana State University, Terrebonne Levee and Conservation District, Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, a New Orleans lawyer, and an environmental law professor at Tulane University to name a few. The public relations practitioners at AWF, CRCL, and GOCA need to develop relationships with *The New York Times* journalists that report on environmental issues or coastal Louisiana parishes. All of the organizations would benefit from having *The New York Times* use them as sources. AWF would become one step closer to really capturing a national audience. CRCL could persuade and lobby for coastal restoration on the national and federal level. GOCA could show a national audience the work that the Louisiana government has been doing to rebuild coastal areas and develop projects that prevent coastal erosion. By building and maintaining relationships with the national news media, the public relations practitioners could further establish these organizations as authorities on coastal erosion and coastal conservation and restoration.

Current Public Relations Practitioners Practices

The public relations practitioners at AWF, CRCL, and GOCA agreed that communicating the issue of coastal erosion and its wide reaching effects is vital to public awareness. Each organizations' publics may differ slightly, but they all have the same message to spread: Coastal erosion will destroy coastal land and communities if we do not act immediately. This may mean the allocation of federal funds for rebuilding and hurricane protection or encouraging local communities to participate in marsh grass plantings.

As discussed in the results chapter, the communication strategies of these organizations serve different purposes (See Table 11). Several of these strategies are similar. AWF and

GOCA discuss maintaining and cultivating relationships with their publics (Macaluso, personal communication, October 2, 2009; Ragusa, personal communication, October 9, 2009). GOCA refers to this a “stakeholder engagement” (Macaluso, personal communication, October 2, 2009). Both of these organizations understand the importance of relationships with publics in order to achieve organizational communication goals.

AWF and GOCA also share an awareness or education goal (Macaluso, personal communication, October 2, 2009; Ragusa, personal communication, October 9, 2009). Though AWF focuses this to a younger target audience, both organizations understand the importance of spreading the word about the detriments of coastal erosion and the importance of coastal restoration activities and projects. The organizations use communication as a tool to increase awareness of the issue.

CRCL’s communication strategies serve to further the organization rather than build relationships with its publics (See Table 11). Though CRCL states it serves as an advocate, the organization cannot advocate for the public if it does not have a read on the public. CRCL needs to focus on not only growing and maintaining its organization, but also growing and maintaining relationships with its publics.

Understanding how the different organizations communicate with their publics may also provide insight about each organization’s communication strategies. AWF has the broadest public of the coastal restoration organizations. AWF wants to be recognized on a local, state, national, and international level (Ragusa, personal communication, October 9, 2009). Ways in which AWF reach its publics include community relations, educational programs, and tactics such as press conferences, special events, branding, partnerships, and in-kind and paid media (Ragusa, personal communication, October 9, 2009). AWF seemingly is effective in maintaining

relationships with its local and state publics. AWF appears to be an easily recognizable organization to many in the state. Additionally, the local newspapers take AWF seriously and use the organization as a source of information, unlike the national media, *The New York Times*, which will be discussed later in this research. The lack of coverage from *The New York Times* suggests that AWF may need to focus on national and international audiences to fulfill its communication strategies.

CRCL differs in the way it communicates with its publics. CRCL focuses on lobbying and advocacy for coastal restoration (Peyronnin, personal communication, November 4, 2009). The organization does, however, want to connect with its publics by expanding its communication tools (Peyronnin, personal communication, November 4, 2009). Though CRCL states one of its publics are Louisiana residents, the researcher believes CRCL could utilize more tactics to communicate with this public. Peyronnin described electronic communication methods CRCL used to communicate with membership lists (personal communication, November 4, 2009). “We try to stick to electronic messages...and communicate through the mainstream media,” Peyronnin stated (personal communication, November 4, 2009). The problem with electronic mailing lists is that typically users must sign up to receive these messages. Peyronnin and CRCL may miss key segments of Louisiana residents through strictly electronic communication. Due to the political nature of CRCL, it is understandable that the organization does not focus on education, as AWF does. CRCL should look to new ways to reach older Louisiana residents, who may not be technologically savvy. Printed materials and handouts may be more beneficial to this older public. CRCL would benefit from a communication director to handle these functions and allow Peyronnin to focus on his role as the executive director.

Similarly, GOCA's publics include a diverse group from politicians to shrimpers (Macaluso, personal communication, October 2, 2009). GOCA uses more communication tactics to maintain relationships with these publics. For example, Macaluso cites circulating information on the website, printing materials, and holding public meetings to engage the stakeholders (personal communication, October 2, 2009). Macaluso, however, realizes his staff's limitations. "We need more outreach. Right now we are reactive and I would like to change this," Macaluso said (personal communication, January 25, 2010). Like AWF, Macaluso discussed the importance of educating children and producing materials that teachers could use in the classroom. GOCA would benefit from a larger communication staff. With the importance that the government is placing on coastal restoration, communication from GOCA, CPRA, and OCPR becomes vital to achieving the organizations goals.

The coastal restoration organizations also used different tactics to reach the public (See Table 12). These tactics describe how the public relations practitioners achieve their communication strategies. Some tactics better fulfill the public relations strategies than others.

Remember, AWF cited its public relations strategies as building and maintaining relationships, promoting education of coastal erosion, and branding AWF and AWC. AWF fulfills its building and maintaining relationships strategy through tactics such as special events, partnerships, and media coverage. Promoting education of coastal erosion is achieved through the distribution of educational materials, partnerships, media coverage, television and radio PSAs, conferences, and special events. AWF achieves its branding of the AWF and AWC through branding tactics, media coverage, and television and radio PSAs. The tactics listed by AWF are appropriate tactics to achieve the organization's communication goals.

CRCL cited its public relations strategies as advocacy, growing and maintain the organization, and providing effective communication. To achieve advocacy, CRCL relies on media coverage and lobbying. To achieve the strategy of growing and maintaining the organization, CRCL uses tactics such as media coverage, workshops, conferences, and service projects. CRCL wants to achieve effective communication through emails to a membership list, media coverage, workshops, and conferences. Peyronnin emphasized CRCL's electronic communication (personal interview, November 4, 2009).

GOCA's self-described public relations strategies include stakeholder engagement, media coverage, and building awareness using Governor Jindal. The tactics GOCA use to achieve the stakeholder engagement strategy include press releases, website management, brochures, public meetings, educational materials, and press conferences. These tactics are designed to engage the public in the issue of coastal erosion. To achieve media coverage, GOCA also uses press releases, public meetings, and press conferences to attract media attention and gain coverage of new and important happenings within the government.

Best Practices

The purpose of this thesis was to offer best practices to public relations practitioners involved in communicating the effects of coastal erosion to the public. At the completion of this research, several best practices approaches may be offered to the coastal restoration organizations in this study and to other public relations practitioners focusing on coastal restoration.

America's WETLAND Foundation. As a large organization, AWF has the manpower to achieve its various organizational goals. From a public relations standpoint, the Marmillion + Company successfully utilizes public relations strategies and tactics to help AWF achieve its

goals. Further utilizing the public relations strategies and tactics could additionally benefit the organization and its publics.

To continue a positive community relations strategy, AWF should continue to maintain and build partnerships with like-minded organizations in an effort to spread the message to more diverse audiences and reach a national audience. This is also true for AWF's international relations. While AWF reaches the local publics, it needs to further build relationships with national and international partners. The World Delta Dialogue is a great start.

To build better community relations in New Orleans, AWF should continue to use its mascots, The Estuarians, to teach children about the detriments of coastal erosion. Bringing The Estuarians to Mardi Gras parades or local festivals, like the New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival, would further community relations and spread awareness of AWF and its mission. Continuing school educational programs, like "Wetlands Week," also gets parents and teachers involved in the coastal restoration effort. AWF also needs to continue building relationships with local and prominent businesses. For example, Ragusa mentioned the Tabasco supported America's WETLAND and had AWF's logo on Tabasco bottles (personal communication, October 9, 2009). Additionally, Shell Oil is a large supporter of AWF. AWF is also partnered with professional sporting teams in New Orleans, such as the New Orleans Saints and the New Orleans Hornets. Having the Estuarians come out for a half-time show at a Hornet's home game could further spread the word of AWF and its coastal restoration efforts and provide another community relations opportunity. AWF could hand out AWF stickers, pens, or other promotional items at these professional sporting events also to promote its image and create positive relationships with community members.

AWF should also build community relations in other parts of Louisiana, not just the city of New Orleans. Ragusa described a boat parade as part of a storm warning campaign that ran from Morgan City to Houma and Larose to Houma (personal communication, October 9, 2009). This area of Louisiana has been especially damaged from recent hurricanes, like Hurricane Gustav in 2008. AWF should continue its community relations in this area of Louisiana even when hurricane season is not looming. To reach an older audience, AWF could hold public meetings, create brochures and/or a magazine for mailing distribution, and have more special events in Southeast Louisiana, such as Christmas tree collections to act as barriers in coastal areas, grass plantings, and marsh clean ups. AWF could even partner with Coastal Conservation Association or the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries and sponsor a family fishing day to show the public how the fisheries and wildlife are affected by coastal erosion. To reach their younger audience, AWF should bring The Estuarians into the schools in these parishes, like Terrebonne, Lafourche, and Jefferson, to continue its community relations public relations strategy and build awareness of AWF and its mission.

AWF's international relations include partnerships with like-minded organizations from all around the world in an effort to stop coastal erosion. AWF should continue these international relations strategies. AWF should hold international conferences in partnership with organizations like the World Delta Dialogue where researchers could come together and discuss coastal restoration. AWF could also partner with these international organizations to make informational videos or create informational brochures or magazines highlighting the similarities between deltaic regions. Doing so would allow the deltaic world communities to learn more about each other. AWF could even sponsor a student exchange where students from a Louisiana college or university majoring in coastal engineering or restoration travel to the Netherlands or

other deltaic regions and learn about what these regions are doing to further the education of engineering of coastal restoration projects. Students from the Netherlands could also come to Louisiana and learn what AWF and Louisiana are doing in terms of coastal restoration. (This student exchange would most likely garner positive media coverage of the organizations, as well.)

To continue with AWF's stakeholder engagement public relations strategy, several tactics can cross over from community and international relations strategies. For example with community relations, having students participate in "Wetlands Week" and other activities such as art, photography, and essay contests, AWF engages a younger audience. AWF should continue to interact with this younger public through similar tactics. AWF should create coloring books and sponsored films featuring The Estuarians to continue children's education of coastal restoration. Additionally, community relations special events like grass plantings, marsh clean ups, and family fishing days invite the public to become involved with AWF. With international relations, AWF could invite New Orleans, Houma, or Thibodaux families to take in the international students during the student exchange program. This would allow for further interest in coastal erosion around the world with the public building relationships with others facing similar coastal erosion and threats through AWF. Another way to implement stakeholder engagement from an international relations perspective could involve local publics to ask questions to the members of AWF's international partnerships to also build awareness of the issue and allow the public to become more involved with AWF.

Other stakeholder engagement public relations strategies and tactics for AWF include holding public meetings to allow for two-way communication. Face-to-face discussion with AWF and its various local, national, and international publics would also allow for AWF to

perform more two-way symmetrical communication and get a pulse on public opinion.

Though coastal restoration is important throughout the year, hurricane season presents AWF with a way to remind a larger public about coastal erosion. To further awareness of hurricane season, AWF could have children appear in PSAs or sponsored films and talk about the damage to their home in an effort to reach older audience that may not want to leave their homes when a hurricane is posed to strike and possibly national audiences both using emotional appeals. AWF should continue with special events such as boat parades to spread awareness of hurricane season to those living in vulnerable areas of Southeast Louisiana. AWF could also partner with the Governor's Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness (GOHSEP) to sponsor hurricane preparedness kits for local businesses to give away to residents in the area who might not have the financial resources to prepare their home for hurricane season. AWF could also mail out hurricane preparedness brochures or letters to all residents in coastal Louisiana as a reminder of the upcoming season.

With hurricane awareness, AWF also needs to focus more on its media relations. Ragusa noted that AWF communicated with its public was through paid and in-kind media (personal communication, October 9, 2009). AWF should continue to write and disseminate press releases in order to highlight the organization's accomplishments and give journalists possible story leads. AWF was the second most cited source in the local newspapers in this study, but would benefit from more media coverage. AWF should develop relationships with journalists from local, national, and international media in an effort to raise awareness of coastal erosion and the organization. Most of the special events, such as family fishing day, grass plantings, and student exchange programs, easily lend themselves for media coverage and should contact AWF for more information. Traveling to other cities, especially cities on the Mississippi River, and

explaining the issue of coastal erosion and the interconnectedness of cities with New Orleans could garner national media attention of AWF and further spread the message. International news media may also come to any international conferences held by AWF and the student exchange programs. By focusing more on media relations, AWF may reach larger and different publics through national and international media. Additionally, by building and maintaining relationships with local media, the local media can disseminate AWF's message possibly increasing local stakeholder engagement and highlighting AWF's community relations.

Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana. With no communications director, CRCL lacks the public relations strategies and tactics necessary for the organization's continued success. The organization claims media is an important way for CRCL to get its message out to the public, however, with only six press releases and the lowest number of appearances as media sources, it seems CRCL struggles to reach its public. Additionally, though the organization noted a very large public including government and Louisiana residents, Peyronnin noted that another popular communication method of CRCL was a voluntary sign-up email listserv. CRCL needs to reprioritize its public relations strategies and tactics in order to remain a source of information on coastal erosion and a representative of public opinion.

An important public relations strategy for CRCL to implement is stakeholder engagement. Peyronnin described CRCL's services included advocacy for the public (personal communication, November 4, 2009). With limited communication outlets, unless a concerned member of the public directly contacts CRCL, it seems difficult for CRCL to really gain a comprehensive understanding of how the public feels on the issues of coastal erosion and coastal restoration. To better its stakeholder engagement, CRCL needs more interpersonal communication with its publics. Wilcox et al. (2000) note, "Telephone or face-to-face

conversation...offers immediate clarification and feedback so that misunderstandings are minimized” (p. 498). To really achieve two-way symmetrical communication, CRCL needs its publics to feel like the organization knows what they have to say before CRCL can lobby for what the public wants. Although Peyronnin describes that email provides a feedback loop, Wilcox et al. (2000) counter saying, “Although e-mail also offers...immediacy and can emulate some characteristics of conversation, it is no substitute” (p. 498). Additionally, there are many publics that CRCL may not reach by only using the Internet as a means of communication. CRCL would benefit from holding public meetings, conferences, and focus groups to understand its publics.

CRCL also needs work on its media relations public relations strategy. Peyronnin discussed that CRCL communicated with its publics through the media (personal communication, November 4, 2009). This study revealed, however, that CRCL was the least cited coastal restoration organizational source and only produced six press releases in the past four years. Hiring a communications director may alleviate CRCL’s lack of media relations. CRCL should write press releases and hold news conferences and public meetings to gain the media’s interest in the organization. By doing so and gaining more media coverage, CRCL may spread awareness of the organization and reach more of its target publics.

Peyronnin mentioned community-based restoration programs that fall into the community relations public relations strategy (personal communication, November 4, 2009). Though Peyronnin did not discuss it, CRCL’s website reveals another community relations effort in the form of a stewardship banquet (“Stewardship Programs,” 2010). CRCL should continue to recognize outstanding members of the community by presenting them with awards on an annual basis. CRCL, however, does need to focus on more community relations efforts to spread

awareness of the organization and reach more of its publics. In addition to building relationships with the community, spreading awareness of the organization would also fulfill one of Peyronnin's goals for the organization of growing and maintaining the organization. In an effort to build relationships with different communities, CRCL could sponsor a coastal area particularly affected by coastal erosion. For example, after a hurricane, CRCL could aid a coastal Louisiana landowner with the rebuilding and fortifying efforts of a particular area. This project could focus on repairing any property from rebuilding the Grand Isle High School to helping a Baton Rouge park clear debris after a storm. CRCL wouldn't have to completely fund the projects, but could promote volunteerism to aid the affected community. CRCL could also start a volunteer program, recognize outstanding volunteers at a volunteer award banquet, and highlight accomplishments in different communities.

Since CRCL is located in Baton Rouge, CRCL could partner with Louisiana State University and Southern University Athletics and hand out informational brochures, magazines, or promotional items at sporting events. CRCL would also benefit from partnering with local Baton Rouge, New Orleans, and Houma organizations and businesses in order to gain a more prominent presence in the community. For example, partnering with CCA could allow for CRCL to reach a recreational fishermen public and get a pulse on the fishermen's opinion of coastal issues. Additionally, partnering with Ducks Unlimited (DU) could provide similar insight for Louisiana duck hunters. Partnering with organizations such as Louisiana Environmental Action Network (LEAN) and the Lake Pontchartrain Basin Foundation could allow for environmentalist perspectives. CRCL should also participate in any events these organizations may coordinate. For example, at the Baton Rouge CCA Banquet, CRCL could also hand out informational material and promotional items.

CRCL also needs to ensure that its governmental relations public relations strategy is strong and would do well to develop a strategic plan that outlines specific governmental relations strategies, especially for lobbying and advocacy. Peyronnin described working with local, state, and federal agencies and Congress on policy (personal communication, November 4, 2009). Communication with these governmental agencies is vital to CRCL. CRCL should periodically hold conferences to understand new issues with coastal restoration. CRCL should operate openly and honestly to maintain and build trust and relationships with government agencies. CRCL would benefit from using interpersonal communication tactics to fulfill the governmental relations strategy. These tactics may include conferences, teleconferencing, speeches, and meetings.

Governor's Office of Coastal Activities. As a government entity, GOCA has high stakes in ensuring effective communication to its public because to continue funding to further coastal restoration, the government needs public support.

GOCA effectively utilizes its governmental relations strategy. Though GOCA doesn't specifically mention governmental relations, it is something the office deals with on a daily basis. GOCA is effective with governmental relations and maintains relationships with different government agencies from Congress to state and federal agencies such as the Department of Transportation (DOTD) to Wildlife and Fisheries and USACE to Department of Natural Resources. GOCA operates with honest and open communication, an important component of governmental relations. GOCA should continue to perform transparent communication to maintain its relationships with other government agencies.

With more communication personnel, GOCA could continue to expand its stakeholder engagement public relations strategy and tactics to reach a broader audience and establish the

organization as an authority on coastal erosion. As it stands, however, GOCA does utilize tactics to reach and engage its publics. Macaluso described GOCA and OCPR's public outreach as public meetings, brochures placed in bait shops up and down the coast, the creation of educational materials for educators and teachers, and providing the public with the same information GOCA provides to the media (personal communication, January 25, 2010). Macaluso also gave examples of stakeholder engagement tactics he hopes one day to implement. These include expos and coloring books (Macaluso, personal communication, January 25, 2010). Other tactics that GOCA could get the public more involved include setting up informational booths at local boat shows, hunting and fishing expos, and marinas to reach local residents that may not understand what GOCA does or promotes. GOCA should also attempt to get email addresses or physical locations of residents that want to continue learning about all GOCA does for coastal restoration.

Again, because of GOCA's staff size, community relations strategies are creative. Macaluso discusses getting information out to educators and teachers as public outreach, but it also applies to community relations. Macaluso wants a coloring book, but other materials such as videos and magazines, may grab the children's attention and in turn get parents interested in coastal erosion and GOCA. GOCA could also start a summer program to educate children about the detriments of coastal erosion in different parishes. The program could take children on field trips to affected areas and teach them about coastal wildlife and fisheries and coastal restoration projects and through the state government to see how the government plays a role in coastal restoration. GOCA could also provide scholarships to coastal engineering students. GOCA could also sponsor a family fishing day and coastal restoration day, such as a grass planting or marsh clean up, as special events to build and maintain relationships within the community.

(These tactics would also garner media attention, which will be discussed later.) Building these relationships with the community will become invaluable to GOCA when it needs public support.

GOCA's media relations strategies prove to be effective. Macaluso discussed the importance of GOCA speaking to the media as a coastal restoration authority (personal communication, January 25, 2010). This study found that GOCA is the most cited coastal restoration source in local newspapers. GOCA's relationships with local media are essential to spreading the message of coastal restoration. GOCA should continue its media relations practices, such as disseminating press releases, using Governor Bobby Jindal as the face of coastal restoration, and participating in open and honest interviews with the media. Because the media use GOCA as a source, it shows that GOCA is a credible and trustworthy government agency.

Limitations and Future Research

This research was able to provide insight on the public relations strategies and communication tools of the coastal restoration organizations because the in-depth interviews the researcher conducted with these organizations' public relations practitioners. The researcher was able to make inferences about why certain organizations focused on attributes and not others. Future researchers should also interview the media, such as news editors, to get a better grasp on why they decide to cover what they do instead of only relying on predetermined news values to make inferences about the coverage.

This research focused on newspaper coverage of coastal erosion. The thought behind this was that coastal erosion is a complex issue that may not translate well to television or radio news coverage. Only exploring the newspaper articles is a limitation of this research, as television or

radio news may shed more light on how the public relations practitioners communicate the issue of coastal erosion and stress the issue of restoration and sustainability. Future research should include national and local television and radio programming.

Future research should also take the public perspective into account. Just because the coastal restoration organizations are disseminating a message and the news media run certain stories, doesn't mean it reaches the public for which it was intended. Focus groups or surveys may take into account the public's opinion of the issue of coastal erosion, who they rely on for information, and what messages are resonating with them.

Conclusions and Implications

Public relations strategies and tactics plays a vital part in fulfilling the coastal restoration public relations practitioners' missions. By building and maintaining relationships with each organization's publics and local and national media, the public relations practitioners have an opportunity to spread the word about coastal erosion to a large audience. Using rational and emotional appeals, the practitioners frame the issue of coastal erosion in ways that resonate with their different publics.

GOCA's public relations strategies and tactics are successful. The organization reaches its publics through the Internet, media, and press releases and listens to what these publics have to say through public meetings and interpersonal communication.

AWF also effectively utilizes public relations strategies and tactics to achieve its goals and mission. AWF functions to spread awareness of coastal erosion to local, national, and international audiences. Continuing its community relations and international relations efforts, AWF can continue to build these state, national, and international relationships that are mutually beneficially to both parties.

CRCL may provide effective communication to its publics, but it seems that these publics may only be reached by email. CRCL should look to different ways to communicate with its publics, such as interpersonal communication or holding public meetings to ensure that they are advocating for public opinion on the issue of coastal erosion. Though CRCL is a small organization, it would benefit the organization to hire a full-time communications director to oversee CRCL's messages and free up the executive director to attend to other pressing matters.

The coastal restoration public relations practitioners cited media coverage as a way to generate awareness and communicate with their publics. The practitioners should look to further cultivate and maintain relationships with local newspapers and take steps to reach out and build relationships with national newspaper outlets. In doing so, these practitioners may reach a wider audience and establish themselves as authorities on Louisiana coastal restoration efforts.

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APPENDIX A
AWF, CRCL, AND GOCA INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. (History of Organization) – How would you describe your organization?
 - Ask about public relations practitioner’s education.
2. What is your organization’s mission?
3. What are the main services that your organization provides?
4. What is your organization best known for?
5. What are the issues your organization faces?
6. What are some challenges and/or opportunities your organization faces?
7. Can you tell me about your organizational and governing structure?
 - How many people are on staff?
 - Is it an autocratic or democratic organization?
8. If you could do so, would you organize the department differently? If yes, how?
9. Where do you fit in the organizational structure?
10. What is your organization’s competitive environment?
11. What types of research or environmental scanning do you do?
12. Who are your stakeholders and publics?
 - What is the demographic and psychographic composition of your publics?
 - How do you communicate with them?
 - How do you cultivate and maintain relationships with your publics?
 - Do you collect feedback from your publics? If so, do you use this feedback to tailor your communication efforts?
13. How important is public communication or public relations to accomplishing your organizational goals?
14. What is your definition of public communication/public relations and how do you see it differing from marketing?
15. What are the roles, duties, scope, and size of the public communication function within your organization?
16. Who is the highest-ranking public communications practitioner for your organization?
17. What are your communication practices and outputs (aka tactics)?
 - Press releases, etc.

- Technology
 - Two-way symmetrical/ public information/ press agency/ two-way asymmetrical communication
 - Media relations
18. What is your role in the dominant or decision-making coalition (would you consider yourself a manager or technician)?
 - What qualities should a successful manager possess?
 19. What are your communication goals?
 - What are the long-range goals and objectives of your organization?
 - What are the short-range goals and objectives of your organization?
 - How do you plan to achieve these goals?
 - What are the most important outcomes you expect?
 - What choices went into your decision making to achieve these goals?
 20. Do you have a way to measure if these communication goals are effective (how do you evaluate)?
 21. Do you enact public communication/public relations theories in your work?
 22. What is your take on diversity in the workplace? Do you think the degree of diversity of the staff should match the degree of diversity to your publics? Why/why not?
 23. What two or three things would be most important to you in your job?
 24. What other variables effect communication for your organization?
 25. Describe a difficult situation in which you had to work. How did you handle the situation? Is there anything you would have done differently in hindsight?
 26. What motivates you to put forth your greatest effort? Describe a situation in which you did so.
 27. Describe a contribution you have made to a project on which you worked.
 28. Was there an occasion when you disagreed with an organizational decision or policy? Describe how you handled the situation.
 29. What two or three accomplishments have given you the most satisfaction? Why?
 30. Is there anything else about your organization or public communication efforts I should know about that I have yet to ask?

APPENDIX B IRB APPROVAL FORMS

Application for Exemption from Institutional Oversight

Unless qualified as meeting the specific criteria for exemption from Institutional Review Board (IRB) oversight, ALL LSU research/ projects using living humans as subjects, or samples, or data obtained from humans, directly or indirectly, with or without their consent, must be approved or exempted in advance by the LSU IRB. This Form helps the PI determine if a project may be exempted, and is used to request an exemption.



Institutional Review Board
Dr. Robert Mathews, Chair
203 B-1 David Boyd Hall
Baton Rouge, LA 70803
P: 225.578.8692
F: 225.578.6792
irb@lsu.edu
lsu.edu/irb

- Applicant, Please fill out the application in its entirety and include the completed application as well as parts A-E, listed below, when submitting to the IRB. Once the application is completed, please submit two copies of the completed application to the IRB Office or to a member of the Human Subjects Screening Committee. Members of this committee can be found at <http://www.lsu.edu/screeningmembers.shtml>
- A Complete Application Includes All of the Following:
- (A) Two copies of this completed form and two copies of part B thru E.
 - (B) A brief project description (adequate to evaluate risks to subjects and to explain your responses to Parts 1&2)
 - (C) Copies of all instruments to be used.
 - *If this proposal is part of a grant proposal, include a copy of the proposal and all recruitment material.
 - (D) The consent form that you will use in the study (see part 3 for more information.)
 - (E) Certificate of Completion of Human Subjects Protection Training for all personnel involved in the project, including students who are involved with testing or handling data, unless already on file with the IRB. Training link: (<http://phrp.nihtaining.com/users/login.php>)

1) Principal Investigator: Ph: Student? Y/N

Dept: Ph: E-mail:

2) Co Investigator(s): please include department, rank, phone and e-mail for each
*If student, please identify and name supervising professor in this space

3) Project Title:

E4876

IRB#	LSU Proposal #
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Complete Application
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Human Subjects Training

4) Proposal? (yes or no) If Yes, LSU Proposal Number

Also, if YES, either ☐ This application completely matches the scope of work in the grant
OR ☐ More IRB Applications will be filed later

Study Exempted By:
Dr. Robert C. Mathews, Chairman
Institutional Review Board
Louisiana State University
203 B-1 David Boyd Hall
225-578-8692 | www.lsu.edu/irb
Exemption Expires: 12-3-2012

5) Subject pool (e.g. Psychology students)

*Circle any "vulnerable populations" to be used: (children <18; the mentally impaired, pregnant women, the ages, other). Projects with incarcerated persons cannot be exempted.

6) PI Signature Date (no per signatures)

** I certify my responses are accurate and complete. If the project scope or design is later changes, I will resubmit for review. I will obtain written approval from the Authorized Representative of all non-LSU institutions in which the study is conducted. I also understand that it is my responsibility to maintain copies of all consent forms at LSU for three years after completion of the study. If I leave LSU before that time the consent forms should be preserved in the Departmental Office.

Screening Committee Action: Exempted <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Not Exempted <input type="checkbox"/>	Category/Paragraph <u>2b</u>
Reviewer <u>Anne Osborne</u> Signature <u>[Signature]</u>	Date <u>12-4-09</u>

Part 1: Determination of "Research" and Potential For Risk

- This section determines whether the project meets the Department of Health and Human Services (HSS) definition of research involving human subjects, and if not, whether it nevertheless presents more than "minimal risk" to human subjects that makes IRB review prudent and necessary.

Consent Form

Study Title: Communicating Conservation: Public Relations Practitioners' Communication Efforts to Inform the Public of the Detriments of Coastal Erosion and Wetlands Loss

Performance Site: public relations practitioners' offices

Investigators: The following investigator is available for questions about this study,
M-F, 8:00 a.m. - 4:30p.m.
Stephanie Shaddock, (337) 802-2914; sshadd1@gmail.com
Nicole Dahmen, (225) 578-2095; ndahmen@lsu.edu

Purpose of the Study: The purpose of this study is to examine public relations practitioners' strategies and tactics of disseminating information about the detriments of coastal erosion and wetlands loss to the public. By looking at communication strategies and tactics, best practices may arise.

Study Procedures: The study includes in-depth interviews with the public relations practitioners. The interviews should not last longer than 2 hours.

Benefits: The study may yield valuable information about best practices for public relations practitioners.

Risks: The only study risk is the inadvertent release of sensitive information found in the interviews. Information that the interviewee requests to remain anonymous will not identify the interviewee.

Right to Refuse: Subjects may choose not to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty or loss of any benefit to which they might otherwise be entitled.

Privacy: Results of the study may be published.

Signatures:

The study has been discussed with me and all my questions have been answered. I may direct additional questions regarding study specifics to the investigators. If I have questions about subjects' rights or other concerns, I can contact Robert C. Mathews, Institutional Review Board, (225) 578-8692, irb@lsu.edu, www.lsu.edu/irb. I agree to participate in the study described above and acknowledge the investigator's obligation to provide me with a signed copy of this consent form.

Subject Signature: _____ Date: _____

Study Exempted By:
Dr. Robert C. Mathews, Chairman
Institutional Review Board
Louisiana State University
203 B-1 David Boyd Hall
225-578-8692 | www.lsu.edu/irb
Exemption Expires: 12-3-2012

APPENDIX C

CODEBOOK FOR PRES RELEASE CODE SHEET

This codebook includes coding instructions regarding the Press Release Code Sheet. This will help coders identify AWF, CRCL, or GOCA's press release themes.

Press Release Code Sheet

1. Identify the source of the press release and circle the appropriate organization
2. Write down the title of the press release in the space provided.
3. Write down the release date of the press release in the space provided.
4. Count the number of words in the press release and write the number down in the space provided.
5. Thoroughly read the press release and try to develop an overall sense of the story.
6. Identify attributes of the press release: cost, economic effect, ecotourism, engineering, fisheries, government, hurricane, oil and gas industry, philanthropy, ports, research, shipping, spotlight or an organization, wildlife, other, geology, or culture. If the press release doesn't fit into a category exactly, then mark the category that it fits best.
 - a. Cost: This attribute focused on the amount of money it would cost to attain a sustainable coast. For example, the price tag or cost to save the coast is an attribute of cost.
 - b. Culture: This attribute refers to the people, communities, and traditions of Louisiana. For example, the culture attribute may be present in a press release about a community lost to a hurricane or Mardi Gras parades.
 - c. Economic effect: This attribute focused on Louisiana loss as a result of continual coastal erosion. For example, the economic effect on local businesses or fishing industries would exhibit the economic effect attribute.
 - d. Ecotourism: This attribute referred to how ecotourism in Louisiana is affected by diminishing wetlands and coastal erosion. For example, ecotourism attributes include activities such as boating, watersports, hiking, bird watching, camping, nature photography, and swamp tours.
 - e. Education: This attribute refers to educational programs about coastal erosion and restoration.
 - f. Engineering: This attribute referred to the work done by USACE or possible engineering projects to save the wetlands. For example, mentions of levees and river diversions exhibit the engineering attribute.
 - g. Fisheries: This attribute focused on the impact Louisiana fisheries would sustain with coastal erosion and diminished wetlands. Fisheries include commercial and recreational fishing, shrimping, and oyster and crab harvesting. For example, oyster harvesters losing shellfish as a result of a river diversion is a fisheries attribute.

- h. Geology: This attribute refers to the Earth's natural processes. For example, the press release may mention sediment moving downriver.
 - i. Government: This attribute included appeals to the President and calls of action on the state and parish levels. Mentions of Presidents Bush or Obama, Governors Blanco or Jindal, Senators Landrieu or Vitter, Mayors Roach, Holden, or Nagin, or others, as well as mentions of state or federal organizations, such as the CPRA or the USACE, exhibit the government attribute.
 - j. Hurricanes: This attribute noted the damage Louisiana would receive from future hurricanes due to diminishing wetlands or the extensive past damage from recent hurricanes, such as Hurricanes Katrina, Rita, Gustav, or Ike.
 - k. Oil and gas industry: This attribute focused on the industry and how coastal erosion affected these players. For example, energy, natural gas, and oil production mentions exhibit the oil and gas industry attribute.
 - l. Philanthropy: This attribute boosted the organization's public image and included actions such as donations to wetlands protection programs. For example, a monetary donation or grass planting in coastal areas exhibits the philanthropy attribute.
 - m. Ports: This attribute included specific ports mentioned and the effect coastal erosion has on the ports, such as potential or past damage caused by coastal erosion. This includes mentions of specific ports, such as the Port of New Orleans or Port Fourchon.
 - n. Research: This attribute focused on educational research about wetlands or coastal erosion. For example, research about public opinion or how to sustain coastal Louisiana exhibits the research attribute.
 - o. Shipping: This attribute included the effects coastal erosion and diminishing wetlands have on shipping throughout Louisiana and the United States.
 - p. Spotlight of the organization: This attribute only highlighted the recent work or accomplishment of an organization. For example, this may highlight a recent award won by a member of an organization or inform the public of recent good deeds that an organization performed.
 - q. Wildlife: This attribute focused on the impact of coastal erosion and diminishing wetlands on different species of wildlife, such as migratory birds or endangered species. For example, this may focus on nutria destroying habitats or the effects of hurricanes on migratory birds.
 - r. Other: This category was used if the story was not applicable to the other attributes. The coder has the opportunity to list what attribute they feel the press release falls under in space provided. For example, this may include announcements for meeting dates.
7. Include any relevant comments that may be helpful to the researcher in understanding the main points of the press release.

APPENDIX D
PRESS RELEASE CODE SHEET

Press Release Source: AWF CRCL GOCA

Title of Press Release: _____

Release Date: _____

Length of Release: _____
[Number of words]

Release Attributes: Cost
 Culture
 Economic effects
 Ecotourism
 Engineering
 Fisheries
 Geology
 Government
 Hurricane
 Oil and gas industries
 Philanthropy
 Ports
 Research
 Shipping
 Spotlight of organization
 Wildlife
 Other

Comments: _____

APPENDIX E

CODEBOOK FOR NEWS ARTICLE CODE SHEET

This codebook includes instructions for the News Article Code Sheet. This will help coders identify what themes *The Advocate*, *The Times-Picayune*, and *The New York Times* use.

Media Code Sheet:

1. Identify the source of the news article and circle the appropriate newspaper.
2. Write down the title of the news article in the space provided.
3. Write down the release date of the news article in the space provided.
4. Count the number of words in the news article and write the number down in the space provided.
5. Thoroughly read the news article and try to develop an overall sense of the story.
6. Identify attributes of the news article: cost, economic effect, ecotourism, engineering, fisheries, government, hurricane, oil and gas industry, philanthropy, ports, research, shipping, spotlight or an organization, wildlife, other, geology, or culture. If the news article doesn't fit into a category exactly, then mark the category that it fits best.
 - a. Cost: This attribute focused on the amount of money it would cost to attain a sustainable coast. For example, the price tag or cost to save the coast is an attribute of cost.
 - b. Culture: This attribute refers to the people, communities, and traditions of Louisiana. For example, the culture attribute may be present in a press release about a community lost to a hurricane or Mardi Gras parades.
 - c. Economic effect: This attribute focused on Louisiana loss as a result of continual coastal erosion. For example, the economic effect on local businesses or fishing industries would exhibit the economic effect attribute.
 - d. Ecotourism: This attribute referred to how ecotourism in Louisiana is affected by diminishing wetlands and coastal erosion. For example, ecotourism attributes include activities such as boating, watersports, hiking, bird watching, camping, nature photography, and swamp tours.
 - e. Education: This attribute refers to educational programs about coastal erosion and restoration.
 - f. Engineering: This attribute referred to the work done by USACE or possible engineering projects to save the wetlands. For example, mentions of levees and river diversions exhibit the engineering attribute.
 - g. Fisheries: This attribute focused on the impact Louisiana fisheries would sustain with coastal erosion and diminished wetlands. Fisheries include commercial and recreational fishing, shrimping, and oyster and crab harvesting. For example, oyster harvesters losing shellfish as a result of a river diversion is a fisheries attribute.

- h. Geology: This attribute refers to the Earth's natural processes. For example, the press release may mention sediment moving downriver.
 - i. Government: This attribute included appeals to the President and calls of action on the state and parish levels. Mentions of Presidents Bush or Obama, Governors Blanco or Jindal, Senators Landrieu or Vitter, Mayors Roach, Holden, or Nagin, or others, as well as mentions of state or federal organizations, such as the CPRA or the USACE, exhibit the government attribute.
 - j. Hurricanes: This attribute noted the damage Louisiana would receive from future hurricanes due to diminishing wetlands or the extensive past damage from recent hurricanes, such as Hurricanes Katrina, Rita, Gustav, or Ike.
 - k. Oil and gas industry: This attribute focused on the industry and how coastal erosion affected these players. For example, energy, natural gas, and oil production mentions exhibit the oil and gas industry attribute.
 - l. Philanthropy: This attribute boosted the organization's public image and included actions such as donations to wetlands protection programs. For example, a monetary donation or grass planting in coastal areas exhibits the philanthropy attribute.
 - m. Ports: This attribute included specific ports mentioned and the effect coastal erosion has on the ports, such as potential or past damage caused by coastal erosion. This includes mentions of specific ports, such as the Port of New Orleans or Port Fourchon.
 - n. Research: This attribute focused on educational research about wetlands or coastal erosion. For example, research about public opinion or how to sustain coastal Louisiana exhibits the research attribute.
 - o. Shipping: This attribute included the effects coastal erosion and diminishing wetlands have on shipping throughout Louisiana and the United States.
 - p. Spotlight of the organization: This attribute only highlighted the recent work or accomplishment of an organization. For example, this may highlight a recent award won by a member of an organization or inform the public of recent good deeds that an organization performed.
 - q. Wildlife: This attribute focused on the impact of coastal erosion and diminishing wetlands on different species of wildlife, such as migratory birds or endangered species. For example, this may focus on nutria destroying habitats or the effects of hurricanes on migratory birds.
 - r. Other: This category was used if the story was not applicable to the other attributes. The coder has the opportunity to list what attribute they feel the press release falls under in space provided. For example, this may include announcements for meeting dates.
7. Identify the major attribute of the news story from the above categories.

8. Identify if the news story was hard news, such as public affairs information, or soft news, such as an entertainment story.
9. Identify which sources the journalist used in the news story and mark the source. If the source was not a public relations practitioner or spokesperson from AWF, CRCL, or GOCA, mark the space provided for “Other.”
10. If the source was a public relations practitioner or spokesperson from AWF, CRCL, or GOCA, write down the quote word-for-word in the space provided.
11. Include any relevant comments that may be helpful to the researcher in understanding the main points of the news story.

APPENDIX F
NEWS ARTICLE CODE SHEET

News Source: *The Advocate* *The Times-Picayune* *The New York Times*

Title of Story: _____

Date of Story: _____

Length of Story: _____

[Number of words]

Story Attributes:

Cost
Culture
Economic effects
Ecotourism
Education
Engineering
Fisheries
Geology
Government
Hurricane
Oil and gas industries
Philanthropy
Ports
Research
Shipping
Spotlight of an organization
Wildlife
Other

Major Theme: _____

Overarching: Hard News (Ex.- public affairs)
 Soft News (Ex.- entertainment)

Source: America's WETLAND Foundation
 Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana
 Governor's Office of Coastal Affairs
 Other: _____

If AWF, CRCL, or GOCA are quoted, include word for word: _____

Comments: _____

APPENDIX G
CHRIS MACALUSO CONSENT FORM

Consent Form

Study Title: Communicating Conservation: Public Relations Practitioners' Communication Efforts to Inform the Public of the Detriments of Coastal Erosion and Wetlands Loss

Performance Site: public relations practitioners' offices

Investigators: The following investigator is available for questions about this study,
M-F, 8:00 a.m. - 4:30p.m.
Stephanie Shaddock, (337) 802-2914; sshadd1@gmail.com
Nicole Dahmen, (225) 578-2095; ndahmen@lsu.edu

Purpose of the Study: The purpose of this study is to examine public relations practitioners' strategies and tactics of disseminating information about the detriments of coastal erosion and wetlands loss to the public. By looking at communication strategies and tactics, best practices may arise.

Study Procedures: The study includes in-depth interviews with the public relations practitioners. The interviews should not last longer than 2 hours.

Benefits: The study may yield valuable information about best practices for public relations practitioners.

Risks: The only study risk is the inadvertent release of sensitive information found in the interviews. Information that the interviewee requests to remain anonymous will not identify the interviewee.

Right to Refuse: Subjects may choose not to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty or loss of any benefit to which they might otherwise be entitled.

Privacy: Results of the study may be published.

Signatures:

The study has been discussed with me and all my questions have been answered. I may direct additional questions regarding study specifics to the investigators. If I have questions about subjects' rights or other concerns, I can contact Robert C. Mathews, Institutional Review Board, (225) 578-8692, irb@lsu.edu, www.lsu.edu/irb. I agree to participate in the study described above and acknowledge the investigator's obligation to provide me with a signed copy of this consent form.

Subject Signature: Chris Macaluso Date: 1-25-2010

APPENDIX H

CHRIS MACALUSO INTERVIEW

Chris Macaluso, GOCA and OCPR Public Information Director

Tell me a little bit about your position.

I've been relegated to being reactive. Most of what I do is media relations. We have a story written about our office everyday. We do outreach and media relations for papers as small as the Morgan City paper, Donaldsonville *Chief*, all the way up to *The New York Times*, BBC, NPR, CNN. We've had CNN, CBS, and FOX News down here to get on helicopters. Mainly what I do is media relations.

Can you tell me a little bit about your organization and your role?

I am the communication director for what this office is: Office of Coastal Protection and Restoration and also Governor's Office of Coastal Activities. The line between these offices are blurry but there are some distinctions. Before 2005, before legislature created CPRA, all restoration work was handled by DNR, and all levee and flood protection work was handled by DOTD, which they called public works. DNR did mainly wetland restoration work and doing less than \$50 million of work a year. Now DOTD, I'm not sure how much they were doing over there, but a lot of the levee work done in Louisiana was done by local levee districts and inspected by DOTD and the USACE. What happened in 2005, Katrina, Rita, messed everything up and legislature realized they needed one centralized office to handle it; coastal restoration work had to work in concert with levee protection work to make sure that we weren't competing for same pots of money, to make sure levee work wasn't done with no regard to coastal restoration work, to make sure that marsh protection was built in concert with the levees because levees themselves can't withstand direct impact from storm surges, we have to have wetlands seaward of the levees in order to protect them. So the legislature came out and created CPRA and required that we write the Coastal comprehensive master plan. And it required that levee work and coastal restoration work be integrated and that's where this office came from- Office of Coastal Protection and Restoration. The GOCA office- Garret Graves is the head, he is the governor's advisor; they are responsible for policy. OCPR- put projects on the ground, work day by day with the USACE, work with the levee districts, work with fish and wildlife service and whomever else we work with on the federal level or the local level to make sure that the projects get built. We let all the contracts. GOCA does all the bitching- goes to Congress and the legislature, goes to the legislators, and the higher ups at USACE and the governor if he needs to make a statement, where money needs to be appropriated. Do a lot of lobbying- Garret spends a lot of time in DC. There's a difference. Any time there is a controversy, we deal with it on that end as a policy standpoint. Nobody in this office is responsible for answering questions regarding "What do you think about this?" all we do here is answer questions about facts. This is how we are going to proceed, this is the scope of the project, this is how many acres we've built this year, this is how many levees we've built, this is the reality of all the property we need to buy. GOCA deals with "What do you think about this amendment failing?", "What do you think about Congress approving all of these projects, but not appropriating any money for them?" The controversy and spin has to come from that end. You'll see Garret in the media constantly.

There are requests that come in almost daily to talk to him, sit down with him, put him in front of a camera, on the radio.

What is the mission of GOCA and OCPR?

The mission is to rebuild coastal Louisiana, rebuild wetland restoration projects, get the ecosystem working again, and to make sure that the levee projects being constructed are done in the best possible manner. Make sure lives and livelihood and culture and industry and infrastructure, fisheries are protected.

What are the main services your organization provides?

I do all of the media relations. I try to play goalie, basically. I work with biologists and engineers and project managers and people like that. Some of them are very comfortable talking to the media and some of them are not. So I know which ones I can go to and the media doesn't always want to talk to the public relations person. They know I'm trying to spin it. That's my job. Especially if I need to get the answers to the media from multiple sources, I'll just consolidate it and give the answers if they are asking for a radio or TV interview, I have experience in both so I am comfortable in doing all that. I do press releases, anytime we have a public meeting or ready to launch something for a project, or anytime we sign a partnership agreement with the USACE, I'll do press releases on that. I maintain our website. So, I deal with those aspects. Sometimes, it's just a matter of answering the phone and talking with someone about a project for an hour and half or two hours, so it varies. Now we are working on more public outreach materials. Right now, I'm trying to coordinate with some of the federal agencies to get some video shot, because everyone has video capabilities on their websites. I want to have some B-roll on hand that I can feed to TV stations, to make sure that even if they can't come in the field with me to film a project, they have video at their disposal, so I deal with public information stuff. Just had a new load of brochures delivered. This is kind of my first outreach stab aside from the website.

How long have you worked for the organization?

I've been here 3 years. This office [OCPR] has only been together since July. I worked with GOCA exclusively until July 1 of last year. I do it by myself. With the hurricane, I worked six weeks of overtime in a month. Slept on the floor at the EOC a couple of times, at least I had electricity. It was daunting to say the least. I was by myself. Other agencies had people rotating with them and go home and sleep, but I had to keep my phone at all time. Especially when Ike was coming in we had some levee breaks and the national media had no idea why. They didn't know why levees in Jefferson Parish to state line were failing or being overtopped. It was because those levees aren't built at the same specs as those in New Orleans and Ike caused much more storm surge flooding than Gustav did. It was a busy 5 weeks. The night was Ike was passing, early in the morning, I went home and about midnight I started getting phone calls from CNN, and CBS, and FOX News, and they were wondering why this reporter at WWL had gone to the AP and said the levee in Lafitte had been overtopped. All they really read was 'A levee west of New Orleans has been overtopped' and they thought a levee in NOLA had been overtopped. I answered questions. One of them asked, "Why is this happening?" I said,

“Because there is a hurricane coming.” And they said “What hurricane?” And I said, “Ike” and they said, “No that’s going to hit Texas” but that’s what its from. We flood anytime we get a hurricane in the Gulf. That’s just the bottom line. It was interesting. We did this brochure and ran 1000 of them and handed them out real quick and then I had 5000 more printed and we are going to hand them out at gas stations, grocery stores, bait shops all along the coast. This is me trying to do more outreach rather than just being proactive.

Can you tell me about your communication practices?

I came on after Katrina and Rita. To me, the phone never stops ringing. We are constantly getting requests and rightfully so. We have a lot of work being done right now. The USACE is spending \$15 billion in New Orleans. So everyday there is something controversial with that, especially *The Times-Picayune*, there is a levee or wetland story in there everyday, the same with the *Houma Courier*. They desperately want to get their levee system built after being flooded by Rita and Ike. There is a lot of community activism down there to get the levees built and wetlands rebuilt. So that’s a daily thing. If I look in *The Times-Picayune* today and I was just looking at clips, and I do media clips, anywhere from 3-10 a day with something that we do, something that I think my boss would be interested in reading because there are so many different aspects involved here, especially with funding. Right now we are sitting on about \$1.5 billion of state and federal money that we know and that is not counting the New Orleans funding. That is separate from hurricane protection system in New Orleans. Right now its about \$1.5 billion from state surplus money, money that the federal government gave us for outer continental shelf oil and gas production, money that’s in a couple of federal programs that we work with on a regular basis. So we have projects being put on the ground all the time. Anytime you have policy changes in Washington D.C. regarding oil and gas exploration, energy legislation, water appropriation bills, it potentially changes our funding stream. Until 2012, we have a pretty substantial pool of money that we are sitting on and we can continue to build projects like, thousands of acres of marsh and barrier island restoration projects, we are trying to build river diversions as much as possible, and make use of materials that we are pulling out of navigation channels, we are trying to get the USACE to use that material as much as possible so we’re going to spend that money. But between 2012 and 2017, where we have a funding gap of federal money, we have a gap there where we aren’t going to get federal funds from oil and gas exploration, we are going to run out of money. So we need to find a way to bridge that gap and every time we look at the newspaper, especially in a political reality with White House and Congress controlled by Democrats, they are very oil exploration un-friendly. That has a direct impact on how much money we have to be able to restore and protect the coast. So we try and stay on top of that as much as possible.

Can you tell me about how you measure your communication’s effectiveness?

I usually track [media] by putting an alert on Google News. I typed in Coastal LA, Coastal wetlands, Louisiana coastal wetlands, outer continental shelf. I get about 50ish emails a day and about 8 or 10 apply to our office. We’ve gotten a lot more national media exposure, unfortunately, I think national media exposure deals specifically, with the nature of national TV, with key word stuff: Katrina, levees, 9th Ward. There is so much more going on than that and that’s what we are trying to sell to the rest of the nation that its not just about the Lower 9th

Ward, but an entire industry and infrastructure is at risk. An entire ecosystem that is as valuable to this country, or much more valuable, than the Everglades. That's at risk. That's the kind of message we're trying to sell to people. You can't really convince them that the situation is as dire as it is until you get them down here and show them video, and take them to places and say, that used to be land and that last year was land. When you look at what has taken place down here, all of this used to be land and it's just not there anymore. We have this amazing ecosystem and delta that we have manipulated to the point where it doesn't work anymore. And yet, we still have the best recreation and commercial fishing in the country aside from Alaska. It's still there, it's just progressively going to decline if we don't put the ecosystem back to work.

What communication issues does your office face?

I think first and foremost is establishing its own identity, separating ourselves from the USACE, from what we do from what they do. They get a bad rap no matter what they do, and deservedly so. I will tell you that they are single-handedly the most irresponsible federal agency that I've ever dealt with or seen and it continues. The bureaucracy, the layers on layers that you have to dig through, the lack of accountability, the organization as a whole, is appalling sometimes. That being said, at the same time, they do have very good people working for them. They have the best of intentions who are trying their hardest to dig their way through those layers and bureaucracies but ultimately they are just delivering the message that comes down from the chain of command and it can be very frustrating to deal with that organization. But, we have to separate ourselves from that. When I take people out to barrier island restoration projects, and we have completely restored and rebuilt two barrier islands on our coast this year- one in Plaquemines Parish and one in Terrebonne Parish- and we are starting work on another one in Plaquemines called East Grand Terre and we are going to rebuild two plus miles of beaches and dunes and rebuild 500 acres of marsh, but completely rebuild this island. I can take that and take reporters out to these sites and say our organization along with the EPA, or Fish and Wildlife Service completely rebuilt this island. The USACE has been debating whether or not they can do similar projects for decades. What is the problem here? Where do the delays come from? So establishing own identity and show that we are working toward a goal is priority number one. Dealing with the different publics: the priorities of people we deal with in New Orleans, St. Bernard Parish and Plaquemines Parish and sometimes Houma are different from the priorities of people in Cameron and other parts of Terrebonne and Lafourche and Jefferson. Some people want nothing but restoration. Some people want a lot more levees. And you have to recognize the difference in 2 audiences or multiple audiences. In New Orleans, telling people that we are working with the USACE to make sure the \$15 billion worth of levee work that takes place in the next three years that sells, but you say that in Houma and they get angry about it. So you have to recognize who you are addressing the message to. Another challenge: convincing people on a national level. We deal with having to convince a national audience because ultimately the funding for these large scale projects are going to have to come from Congress and they have their own priorities and their own people that they have to take care of and often times they just don't recognize the pleas for additional funding. We have to convince their constituents how important it is to restore and protect this area. There are day-to-day challenges too. Like no matter how much positive news we report, like this year we may break even on net land loss, but if you add up damage from four hurricanes in four years, plus 340 square miles of land, we still have an ecosystem in a state of collapse. We still have communities that are unprotected to

storm surge. I mean, we aren't out of the woods yet. We try to be as optimistic as we can and I try to feed optimism to the press but if they pick up the phone and call Kerry St. Pe and Barataria Estuary Program or call some of these other non-government organizations or geologists or scientists who aren't taking shots, but the poke holes in the methods and methodology and if they call these guys they are going to say that this is a bunch of hogwash. What difference does it make if we get close to zero this year when we've lost 340 square miles in years before? You do what you can to get positive news out there.

What opportunities does your organization have?

We have opportunities to show people that we are doing a lot of work. For the first time in a long time have multiple projects taking place at the same time and we're doing a massive amount of restoration work. The project that we took the press to this week, the project scope on paper was 1200 acres, and we have enough material and money to make it even larger than that. So it may be as big as 1800 acres of marsh restored in Jefferson Parish. That's the largest project we've ever built and that's being built with state and federal money, not USACE money, but state and federal funds from different pots of money. That's a big deal. When people tell us in Terrebonne that we need to rebuild the barrier islands, I can pull out a news article that shows them that we are rebuilding their barrier islands. We have a new office that we can go out and promote and tell people that for the first time in this state's history we have incorporated levee building in coastal erosion work. The government becomes important in this process because we need \$600 million for coastal protection and coastal restoration. The Congressional delegates are cognizant of our financial need. Not just our delegates, but we need to put pressure of the USACE to get stuff done. The new Assistant Secretary to the Army is aware of the situation and can handle the problems better. Even if there is no outreach, we still get phone calls. It's overwhelming, but it makes the job easier to know that people are out there who care.

Can you tell me about your proudest moment?

During Hurricane Gustav, I did an interview on WBRZ. I was sitting in on a teleconference from various parishes at 5 am. Fourchon clocked 115 mph sustained winds. *USA Today* tried to say that the New Orleans levees failed. But the USACE built these levees back better than they were before. So we didn't think that the levees failed, more that they were overtopped. And overtopping is not failure. CNN had a camera over the bridge floodwalls and water was slightly overlapping. Geraldo Rivera reported that the levees were failing. I decided that we needed to call a press conference now. I needed to explain that wave action did not mean failure. After an hour, I got factual information to people. Things are going to get wet; it's a natural process in a hurricane. The city is not flooding. The improvements were made and the levees stood up to the challenge. There were no failures- the only things that failed were things that we expected to fail. I had to convince the media of this.

Do you think any changes need to be made as far as the structure of the organization goes?

There is no HR for the office, and we need to have an HR department. You don't think you need it until you do.

Do you perform environmental scanning?

I do media clippings and go to public meetings to get the pulse on what the public is saying, I talk and listen to the heads of media at the NGOS and CAE, however, there are 15 heads of media at the USACE in New Orleans, and that makes things difficult.

Who are your publics?

Our publics are very diverse. Our publics include Congressmen in Louisiana and all the other states, the presidential administration and everyone in between including shrimpers and crabbers.

How do you maintain a relationship with these publics?

To maintain relationships with these publics, we circulate information, especially on the website. We also have printed publications. We have public meetings to get the word out. Some of these public meetings are required and others aren't. We hold them all over the state. Our regional stakeholders, like those in New Orleans, Houma and Southwest Louisiana are a very diverse group of people. For example, you have environmentalists, industry, civic, fishery, and landowners. WE also use the governor. He holds 8-10 press conferences a year and we try to spread the location around like Lake Charles, Houma, Plaquemine, New Orleans. We really want to put Governor Jindal's face on this issue.

We communicate things that are going on through the press releases.

We have staff limitations. We need more outreach. Right now we are reactive and I would like to change this.

We need to go to more expos, like Earth Day.

We develop materials for teachers and classrooms so we can start young and educate the children about the importance of coastal restoration and the wetlands.

With a staff of only one, you can only be reactive. I do have an assistant, but at this time she is out of the office for a month on health leave. It will nice when she is back because I can tell her to update the website and do more technician functions.

How do you use communication to accomplish your goals?

It's absolutely vital. We have to pacify the fears of the people who live in this great state. We have to convince the nation that we are worth investing in. We have to get our user groups with their different cultures and our stakeholders to have a common vision. It is essential to do this in a timely manner. We have to convince these publics that it's time to agree, resolve their differences, and make them understand that this is something worth fighting for. We need the USACE to get off their ass. We are all involved and public relation is where it's at.

How do you measure the effectiveness of your communication?

I don't have a form a measurement that I use. I do look at how many positive stories we can generate. I take it personally. I feel that it is my job to make sure that the information is out there. I grew up in Louisiana. I want to make sure that the state knows we are trying to do good things. I don't want to piss off reporters. But I also talk to people face to face. I thank them for

being interested. You have to keep people informed. For example, the day after Gustav, I had reporters calling me asking me how much damage was done to the wetlands and I had to tell them, it's still blowing here. We can't assess the damage yet. It's still affecting us. They had no idea. You have to enlighten them. I think we could do a better job of gauging our effectiveness. It's about winning the hearts and minds of our publics.

Can you tell me a little about your educational background?

I have a degree in History from LSU. I worked for *The Reveille*, AP, radio, TV production. I loved being in the media's eye. I also worked for [Coastal Conservation Association] CCA doing communication work and [The Recreation and Park Commission for the Parish of East Baton Rouge] BREC.

Do you enact public relations theories in your work?

I perform SWOT analysis. I also try to be responsive to media. There are things that politicians don't want me to say, but I'm honest. I can't afford to lose my credibility in this environment. I can't violate the ethics rules either.

Can you tell me about your strategies?

Well because of our staff size, that aspect of the office is what's lacking more than anything else and you'll find that is the case in a lot of state agencies. But there are some agencies with a lot of communications people with a public information director and four or five [public information officers] PIOs that can handle the various aspects that are going on. Most agencies, Department of Corrections or DNR, have a one or two person staff. Strategies and tactics: We certainly have ideas about how we would like to involve the public more, how we would like to reach out especially to educators and teachers to get more information about the office spread around, but I think the main thrust of what we're trying to do right now is to get our face in front of as many people as possible with the limited assets that we have in terms of personnel. We try to address as many stakeholder groups as possible. We try to have as many public information groups as we can to gather information. We try to engage our public and stakeholders in the same kind of information that we send the media. We try to make our executives available to the media as much as we can, as much as their time allows. We try to arrange as many long-form television interviews, documentary style pieces that we can. We try to get the media into the public and where we work and out to the project site as much as possible. We've been fortunate from the coastal aspect that it's a really hot button issue at this point and that people pay a lot of attention to and a lot of money dedicated to it. The unfortunate realities of that is that every time we have a hurricane, that's what reminds people. Every time hurricane season approaches, more than any other time people want to know what we're doing, what's the status of this projects, what's going on with these levees. But the Governor and the governor's office recognize that this is one of the most important things, and possibly the most important thing, that's going on, say south of Alexandria, and he and his staff want to be a part of making these announcements about project accomplishments as much as possible, so I would say this year, depending on his schedule, we'll have six to eight press conferences with the Governor, same as we had last year, where he is making announcements about projects that we're doing with coastal restoration. When he first

got elected, it was like following a rock star around. I think some of the luster has worn off but I think in terms of his administration's commitment to coastal restoration, I think it's unparalleled and I think they're doing what they need to do to move these things forward. Anytime you put his face in front of it, it draws a lot of attention to it, and that's good that public officials are starting to get it and understand. I'm not just talking about the parish presidents from our coastal parishes, Terrebonne, Plaquemines, they understand, but it's the growth up the chain to state government, to Congress, to the [Obama] administration. This presidential administration has actually responded a lot more so than some administrations in the past. We are getting some cooperation. It's kind of funny how it's working right now. You have a beef about the way the USACE is doing their work so you address that to at USACE district level or division level and it's almost like talking to deaf people. But then you take it to their bosses and their bosses understand, but it has to trickle down, so it's an ongoing struggle. With limited staff and so much going on, us doing roughly 59 percent more work than pre-Katrina, we've been a lot more reactionary in terms of addressing the public than we have proactively. But hopefully we can get on top of that and start reversing that by going out into the public a lot more with literature and video and making improvements to our website to get more interaction and that's kind of what I envision if we do add a third person to the staff. That person would be responsible for marketing and branding this office for the public more so than reactive to inquiries that come in.

Can you tell me about your media relations?

Being the source is important to us when talking about the Office of Coastal Restoration for a long time before the state made the commitment to coastal restoration and hurricane protection, the state didn't do that much work on this stuff. We were doing \$25-50 million of work and now we're doing 10 times that much. We increase the commitment on a per year basis. On the books we have roughly \$780 million in work in this year alone, 2010 alone. That's four times than the work we did in 2009. My point is, this office in particular, I mean, we have three entities working together, the Governor's Office of Coastal Activities, Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority, and Office of Coastal Protection and Restoration. OCPR is supposed to be the technical know-how, put the projects on the ground, and we want people in the media to come to us first. We are the ones holding the cards. Instead of them going to the Tulane Environmental Law Clinic or Lake Pontchartrain Basin Foundation, nothing wrong with what those guys are trying to do, they have a mission, but it's our money. We're spending the money. We're putting forth the dollars, the state's putting forth the dollars to leverage the federal funds and we want people to look at us as the authority on these issues because we are. Ultimately, it's the CPRA working with the federal government working with the local parishes who are moving these projects forward. We very much appreciate the advocacy that we get from the non-governmental organizations, but when it comes to putting projects on the ground, that's our responsibility and so we want the media to come to us. If Garland Robinette does a talk show on WWL, I don't want him asking Carlton Dufrechou how the state should spend this money. I want him asking us.

Can you tell me a little more about your tactics?

We use press releases and now that I've got some help, hopefully this week, we'll start a monthly newsletter that will be sent via email. It's not that big of a deal, but at the same time it

can contain more anecdotal information, something that we wouldn't necessarily put in a press release. For example, if we have a 75 percent completion on the large project, we'll put that in the newsletter and people will know about it. So we're doing a lot of work and we're trying to find ways to get that information to the stakeholders in an easily digestible release. There's a lot of technical aspects with the projects but we're working on ways to communicate the impact of these projects in a better way. Like, we sent out a press release last week that said CWPPRA task force approved roughly \$230 million worth of projects and I got some blow back on that. People said if you break this down on a per acre basis, the press release said \$230 million worth of projects is building 3100 acres of land, roughly, so folks wrote back that on a per acre basis, that was too expensive shouldn't we be able to do it a lot cheaper. And they're right on the surface- we should be able to build it cheaper than that. But just looking at how many acres we're building doesn't take into consideration the full breadth of what those projects mean, so now I have to figure out a way to put out an easily digestible press release of what these things mean. We try, that's the important thing about taking these people out to see these projects because we don't just pick a random piece of land. You look at how important a certain section is to protect the entire ecosystem and that's where you build the projects. Last year we had the Governor make an announcement when we completed a 900 acre restoration of a land bridge, which is a piece of marsh that separates two bodies of water, and we finished one in Terrebonne Parish in November. The 900 acres is important, but what's more important is that now we've reestablished a barrier between salt and fresh water. That's how we're trying to explain these things. We're trying to rebuild natural lines of defense to keep the Gulf of Mexico from going any further inland. We've also done some brochures and we're shooting to do a coloring book, but unfortunately that has not developed to the point where I hoped at this point, but I would like to get it done soon. I've been working with a graphic designer and trying to get some ideas to get it out before the spring, around like Earth Day. We've got some other conventions coming up that we'll go to. Garrett's going to speak to the National Association of Environmental Engineers or Professionals in Atlanta. We've just signed a contract for \$50,000 in animations to be put in PowerPoint presentations that can better illustrate to people visually how important it is to put the river back to work. We're spending money, and trying to spend it as efficiently as possible. That's one thing that you actually have to try and convince people of: that it costs money to do public relations. These things aren't free. It's nice that I've developed professional relationships with people in the business who will do single source contracts and know that I can only spend so much money so they know that when I call them and say, 'Hey, I need this done,' they know they can't spend more than \$49,000 dollars on it. There's a lot of things in state government that are more difficult to work through than private business. You think, you've got money in the budget and you want to spend it this way, but that doesn't always happen.

APPENDIX I
STEVEN PEYRONNIN CONSENT FORM

Consent Form

Study Title: Communicating Conservation: Public Relations Practitioners' Communication Efforts to Inform the Public of the Detriments of Coastal Erosion and Wetlands Loss

Performance Site: public relations practitioners' offices

Investigators: The following investigator is available for questions about this study,
M-F, 8:00 a.m. - 4:30p.m.
Stephanie Shaddock, (337) 802-2914; sshadd1@gmail.com
Nicole Dahmen, (225) 578-2095; ndahmen@lsu.edu

Purpose of the Study: The purpose of this study is to examine public relations practitioners' strategies and tactics of disseminating information about the detriments of coastal erosion and wetlands loss to the public. By looking at communication strategies and tactics, best practices may arise.

Study Procedures: The study includes in-depth interviews with the public relations practitioners. The interviews should not last longer than 2 hours.

Benefits: The study may yield valuable information about best practices for public relations practitioners.

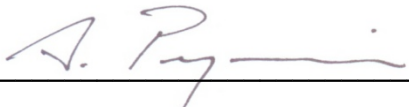
Risks: The only study risk is the inadvertent release of sensitive information found in the interviews. Information that the interviewee requests to remain anonymous will not identify the interviewee.

Right to Refuse: Subjects may choose not to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty or loss of any benefit to which they might otherwise be entitled.

Privacy: Results of the study may be published.

Signatures:

The study has been discussed with me and all my questions have been answered. I may direct additional questions regarding study specifics to the investigators. If I have questions about subjects' rights or other concerns, I can contact Robert C. Mathews, Institutional Review Board, (225) 578-8692, irb@lsu.edu, www.lsu.edu/irb. I agree to participate in the study described above and acknowledge the investigator's obligation to provide me with a signed copy of this consent form.

Subject Signature:  Date: 2-9-10

APPENDIX J

STEVEN PEYRONNIN INTERVIEW

Steven Peyronnin, Director of Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana

Can you tell me about the history of your organization?

CRCL is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit and charitable organization. We are prohibited from adopting a political position, but we can lobby. In 1985, a group of people came together and recognized that coastal land loss was the largest challenge the state would face. They met informally and founded the initial steps and goals. They established an executive authority within the Governor's office and a specific fund within state budget for coastal erosion. In 1987, they formalized a working relationship into a nonprofit and we became incorporated. Under Act 6 in 1989, GOCA was established and set aside a coastal wetlands trust fund. Oil and gas were deposited into this fund. When it was decided that more needed to be done, we grew the organization. Louisiana's coast is a working coast, cultural coast, and environmental coast. The working coast has a lot of different financials, such as oil and gas, fisheries, recreational fisheries, and landowners. These are some big economic engines. As a cultural coast, we house a Native American population and Cajun culture, such as art, history, music, and architecture from a deltaic system. The environmental coast is the seventh largest delta system in world, newest land in world, and the newest land in US. This land is also a habitat for migratory waterfowl and shellfish production. The coast gives the state its identity. To solve problem, we have to get all groups coming together because managing the coast in the way we did would result in continued land loss and everyone with a stake in the land would lose. We had to get everyone involved. It is our ongoing mission to protect and sustain the coast and expand our early partnerships to include diverse groups and participate with organization with members.

Can you tell me about the main services CRCL provides?

We advocate. First, we work with state, parishes, federal agencies, and Congress on policy and authorizations and legal action to put in place programs and actions that will restore coastal Louisiana. There are certain conflicts with policy, landowners, technical, and engineering aspects, but we understand these challenges and help to identify them. We advocate at the local, state, and federal levels. To do that requires that we have significant input from diverse groups. We communicate with them and try to achieve a solution. We need to have a technical capacity and know what our limitations are. We integrate these with an advocacy function. Secondly, it is our responsibility to grow and maintain this organization through conferences and workshops, regional or statewide groups with the latest scientific analysis, and put forth information that helps state and federal partners design a program and implement it. We have a community-based restoration program that puts volunteers together and does physical restoration projects. We look at how the coast functions, how it's important, such as its fisheries, navigation, culture, and oil and gas, and at the same time try to stabilize land loss in certain areas. Thirdly, we try to communicate effectively to large constituency. We have challenges, like what's happening on the coast, with different levels, what actions need to be taken, and how they can help us.

Can you tell me about CRCL's staff?

We have a board of directors with 40 people serving two-year terms. As for officers, we have a board chair, vice chair, and secretary treasurer. It's a small group or executive committee that performs day-to-day management. The full board meets much less frequently and focuses on long-term strategies. The staff reports to the board in a linear fashion. I am the executive director and report directly to the board. We have four additional staff members, and three are directors for science, programs, and operations. We used to have a communications director that was my former position, but now I have been the executive director for two years because of background in political communication. I am the lead for policy and advocacy efforts and to some extent communications.

Would you say CRCL has a competitive environment?

Not really. We deal with compelling issues that reach a large number of stakeholders. We do deal with Ducks Unlimited who has a conservation mission within coastal Louisiana, but they focus on waterfowl and recreational fishermen who have interest in the coast. Coastal Conservation Association also deals with fishermen. And there are other organizations that are either regional, local, or statewide all with narrow applications attributable to 20-25 year history on this issue at a significant scale and scope as it affects all user groups. We are the only statewide nonprofit!

Do you perform environmental scanning?

In the old days, we used a clippings service. Now that we have progressed into digital age and can search online articles and now search engine features that allow us to know. We also use Google Alerts for key words like CRCL of staff members.

Who are CRCL's publics?

Our publics are everyone who lives in coastal Louisiana, most of the people that live in state, and the entities responsible for implementing restoration and protection policies. We could segment these publics a lot further such as development planners and environmental enforcement.

How do you communicate with these publics?

We have an electronic membership list. Members of organizations signed up to receive emails. We no longer have a print newsletter; we try to stick to electronic messages. We also communicate through the mainstream media, such as op-eds and other news coverage.

How do you maintain relationships with these publics?

First of all, our goal is to establish and continue the recognition of the organization and what we do. Public support is necessary. Then we have to demonstrate that we are effective and utilize the platform to be effective. It's like the chicken and the egg. We need the media presence to communicate to raise the profile of organization and effect policy with decision makers by saying we have public opinion voice. Our internal communication efforts have taken an active

role in requesting information, the latest objective information, and no political views to ensure they view us as an objective advocacy organization.

Do you get feedback from your publics?

Yes, to some extent from the media, our peers, or other audiences say things and we follow up with letters to the editor. We also perform personal communication. We have an extensive network of communication after a news story. Peer-to-peer personal discussion takes place also. We also hear back electronically because its easy to create feedback loops. For example, they can email us or call us with what they are interested in.

Is communication important to achieve your organization's goals?

It's essential. We don't manufacture anything, and we don't sell a product. We are advocates and in many ways we have to communicate with stakeholders, talk and listen to publics, to frame our position and then advocate for those positions. We have a huge reliance on communication with decision-makers and create feedback loop. We understand communication is essential to the sustainability of the organization.

Do you consider yourself a manager or a technician?

Manager: to understand how an organization works: board has jobs that may be separate from organization, lot of people with a lot of different interest but with strong commitment to issue and this is why the serve on the board (Board members make a \$ contribution) you have to be proficient in issue and deal with it on a day to day basis!

What are your communication goals?

1. To design and maintain communication strategy
2. To match and expand communication tools with targeted audiences
3. To increase media communication based on CRCL's profiles and positions
4. To develop an evaluation plan for communication

How do you evaluate your communication?

Through quantitative and qualitative methods. For quantitative, we look at mentions and hits in the public media, and how many active responses you receive from members and other audiences in response to a communication piece. We also look at it from an internal perspective. Fundraising needs communication so it's effective if dollars are generated from specific information campaign. For qualitative, the success of the organization on achieving certain interpersonal communication, broad based communication; how and what the impact are resulted from advocacy efforts that you've engaged in

Do you use any public relations theories in your work?

When you get out of grad school, a lot of what you practiced is very different from what you've learned. We try to operate with symmetrical communication and transparency. Eventually, communication becomes intuitive.

APPENDIX K
TODD RAGUSA CONSENT FORM

From: tgragusa@gmail.com
Subject: Re: LSU master's thesis
Date: February 9, 2010 12:12:35 PM CST
To: sshadd1@gmail.com

Stephanie:

I have resigned from Marmillion + Company and started my own consulting business. I'm not sure how this affects your project. Please feel free to use my answers. Though, upon a quick scan I noted the following, "The Master Plan from Governor will never be supported." I believe this was taken out of context, the plan is widely supported, however, it must be made a national priority.

Best,
Todd

On Thu, Feb 4, 2010 at 10:17 AM, Stephanie Shaddock <sshadd1@gmail.com> wrote:
Hi Todd,

My name is Stephanie Shaddock I interviewed you in October about the communication you did for AWF through the Marmillion + Company. I am working on my thesis and I was wondering if I might use your same answers in my thesis (I am comparing how coastal restoration public relations practitioners communicate with their different publics). Because this is a thesis, I have to go through some formal channels, and I have attached a consent form. This is just saying that my interview questions did not pose harm to you and I may use your name when writing the results. If you could sign and scan this back to me it would be a huge help! I am also attaching your interview, just in case you need a refresher on what we talked about. Please contact me if you have any questions. Thank you so much for all of your help!
Stephanie

APPENDIX L

TODD RAGUSA INTERVIEW

Todd Ragusa, Marmillion + Company Accounts Supervisor for America's WETLAND Foundation

Can you tell me a little about your job?

I am an account supervisor with Marmillion + Company contracted by America's WETLAND Foundation in terms of public awareness and public education campaign.

What is the mission of America's WETLAND Foundation?

To raise awareness and increase efforts to support and save coastal Louisiana, and to educate people of the problem and how they affect it all.

Can you tell me about your communication strategies?

We use a multi-prong strategy. At the beginning, we did a lot of in-state public outreach because Louisiana residents didn't really know a lot about the issue. People in the state weren't aware of the problem of coastal erosion. We wanted to reach out to them. We also conducted polling. Now, people in state are more knowledgeable. We also began a storm warning campaign. We had a rally-style concert in New Orleans and Houma, a boat parade along intra coastal canal, from Morgan City to Houma and Larose to Houma. From that campaign we garnered 108 media impressions, with thousands in attendance. Everything we do leading up to an event is promotion. We also want to bring the message home to a national audience. We are a part of America's Energy Coast. This includes Louisiana, Texas, Mississippi, and Alabama. These states have similar vulnerabilities and fuel the nation. A large portion of country's energy comes from this area. Hurricanes Gustav and Ike made gas prices soar. We try to brand these 4 states so we have a louder voice and when we try to get federal and nation attention.

What are the main services that you provide?

The first step in saving America's WETLAND, a term coined through focus groups to try and name region, so the nation would feel a sense of ownership because someone in Wisconsin might not care, was to build a communication strategy about bringing Louisiana, the region, and the nation. Without national support, we will never get federal support. If people don't recognize problem and how it affects them, then it's not as likely as you will get federal support. We have to make it an issue with the public because many were not aware of the coastal erosion problem prior to America's WETLAND Foundation's existence. In terms of communication services, we are branding, using powerful designs with a consistent identity, image and core message. We create outreach opportunities and use print and media strategies to reach out the media and public and generally gain support for the Foundation. We've done a great job with developing relationships with like-minded organizations with the same values in terms of saving Louisiana's coast. We have become a cooperating organization hoping to leverage their networks and ours. For example, there is a link on our website to Restore or Retreat out of Houma, America's

Fisheries, Audubon Nature Institute, local Convention and Visitor Bureaus, Louisiana science teachers, and we have over 100 maybe closer to 150 other organizations. We also are building an educational infrastructure to engage young people. Our older audiences go to conferences, fairs, and pick literature. We support educational activities for students as well with a student art photo and poetry contest, where we engage students with topics like "Wetlands Week." I believe this program reaches 50,000 students. It gets kids thinking about the wetlands. They will pick up the torch about saving the coast as they get older, so it's important we reach them now. We also support long-range restoration activities and support the Foundation with fundraising.

Can you tell me what challenges or opportunities your organization faces?

It's really one in the same. We strive to be a table at which all parties can sit. We receive criticism from different parties at the table because they don't typically work together, such as industry, environmentalists, fisheries, and ports. The only way to get something done is to find things we do agree on. This is the only way to move forward. We serve as umbrella everyone can stand under.

Can you tell me about your organization's structure?

America's WETLAND is a non-profit managed and run by board of directors that we call the Foundation. Val Marmillion is the managing director. He makes the board look at what the Foundation will do. Board members are private citizens, except for Lake Charles Mayor Randy Roach. The typical board structure is representative of all areas. R. King Milling is the Chairman of the board. We also have Tulane environmental law professor Mark Davis and some Houma attorneys. It's a pretty balanced board. They get a lot done.

How many people are members of the communication staff?

Four to five people.

Would you organize your communication structure differently?

No. It's pretty effective, especially for a complex issue.

Can you tell me about your competitive environment?

We are trying to bring several people together to form a niche. Some of these people are wholly environmental preservationists, not conservationists, and then people who are purely industry driven who disregard environment, and everyone in between.

Can you tell me about research your communication staff performs?

We tend to do a lot of polling and focus groups.

Do you perform environmental scanning?

Yes, we look at the other coastal organizations. We try to understand what they're work is and partner with them on the issue.

Who are your organization's publics?

We use the audience onion, but now we are trying to go global. We have partnered with the World Delta Dialogue. This is a group of all deltaic regions facing similar issues. We are trying to make the Mississippi River Delta the center for all things delta in the world. We hold a conference and hope to come to solid solutions that can be shared with other deltaic regions.

How do you communicate with these publics?

We have a comprehensive communication strategy though branding. We use various tactics such as events, conferences, partnerships, Internet, editorials, paid media, in-kind and earned, and television and radio public service announcements.

How do you maintain a relationship with these publics?

We feel that our communication strategies do cultivate a relationship. We have mascots, the Esturarians. The Esturarians are cartoon characters of different animals you would find in wetlands. We also go to parades with the Esturarians and kids recognize them. They are happy to see them and happy for the work we're doing. People are happy because the work we do is close to them. We also perform outreach such as newsletters, brochures, fly an America's WETLAND flag. We also try to stay plugged in and connected to community and we want to reengage the people of Louisiana.

Don't get too much negative feedback: issue that's dear to people; get a lot of support, letters: Tabasco support AW in bottles and people send letters of support

How important is public relations to your organization's goals?

Our essential goal is public relations. We want to raise public education and public awareness of coastal erosion. Public relations is an important strategy.

In your organization, does public relations differ from marketing?

Yes. Public relations and marketing are complementary but not the same. We think of them as separate. We wouldn't want public relations doing marketing and vice versa.

What role does your communication serve?

To enact the mission of public education, what I talked about in the five bullet points from earlier.

What is the scope of your communication?

We are shooting for international attention. We have partnered with the Netherlands and World Delta Dialog.

What duties do you perform?

Developing tactics to achieve our 5 objectives

Can you tell me about the size of your organization?

We are made up of the Foundation, board of directors, one consultant on staff, then four to five or two to three for communication in order to fulfill mission.

Who is the highest-ranking public communication practitioner in your organization?

Val Marmillion- he is the president of the Marmillion + Company and a Foundation member

How do you measure your communication's effectiveness?

Some of it is clear-cut. When we host a conference, if people show up, then we think communication was successful. We also measure number of website hits. Through polling we can indicate if people recognize our brand and the issue. We also calculate media impressions from earned media.

Do you use any public relations theories in your work?

I have a Master's in International Relations. In practice, our theory works around individuals who are self-interested, and sometimes cynical and selfish. You have to appeal to their interests to get their buy in. For example, it's easy to point to gas prices. We use an upriver strategy. The Mississippi River feeds wetlands and connected to 33 states and 2-3 Canadian provinces. We are not just worried about pesticides, but stuff from New Orleans comes up from tires to corn, so our commodities are connected.

APPENDIX M
LISA NOBLE CONSENT FORM

Consent Form

Study Title: Communicating Conservation: Public Relations Practitioners' Communication Efforts to Inform the Public of the Detriments of Coastal Erosion and Wetlands Loss

Performance Site: public relations practitioners' offices

Investigators: The following investigator is available for questions about this study,
M-F, 8:00 a.m. - 4:30p.m.
Stephanie Shaddock, (337) 802-2914; sshadd1@gmail.com
Nicole Dahmen, (225) 578-2095; ndahmen@lsu.edu

Purpose of the Study: The purpose of this study is to examine public relations practitioners' strategies and tactics of disseminating information about the detriments of coastal erosion and wetlands loss to the public. By looking at communication strategies and tactics, best practices may arise.

Study Procedures: The study includes in-depth interviews with the public relations practitioners. The interviews should not last longer than 2 hours.

Benefits: The study may yield valuable information about best practices for public relations practitioners.

Risks: The only study risk is the inadvertent release of sensitive information found in the interviews. Information that the interviewee requests to remain anonymous will not identify the interviewee.

Right to Refuse: Subjects may choose not to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty or loss of any benefit to which they might otherwise be entitled.

Privacy: Results of the study may be published.

Signatures:

The study has been discussed with me and all my questions have been answered. I may direct additional questions regarding study specifics to the investigators. If I have questions about subjects' rights or other concerns, I can contact Robert C. Mathews, Institutional Review Board, (225) 578-8692, irb@lsu.edu, www.lsu.edu/irb. I agree to participate in the study described above and acknowledge the investigator's obligation to provide me with a signed copy of this consent form.

Subject Signature:



Date: 01.27.10

APPENDIX N

LISA NOBLE INTERVIEW

Lisa Noble, America's WETLAND Foundation

Can you tell me about your communication strategies?

This is the 7th year. We use a lot of different strategies. The basic strategic plan where we develop every 3 years for the foundation began in 2002. We refreshed the plan in 2005 and 2008. It outlines the strategies we use. For everyone of our tactics, or assumptions, we've come up with four or five communication components. We use our website, earned media, high profile events, and engagement with stakeholders, to reach our publics. [Speaking of Ragusa's multi-prong strategy] We probably have too many prongs! Everything we do is to communicate. Our goal is to save coastal Louisiana. We put everything to that goal from press conferences with senators, storm warnings events, hurricane season events, and highlighting hurricane season. The strategies we use are for state, national, and international audiences. An example of our international audience is the World Delta Dialogue. America's Energy coast represents our regional strategy. As for national, we try to get the attention of the White House, [Council on Environmental Quality] CEQ, and the people who are writing the best practices for USACE. It's tactical and by the book.

Have you learned anything from these strategies?

I think the take away is to develop a strategic plan and follow it. If you are going to try to engage people and you have a specific practice to engage publics so that you are attacking all these fronts at the same time in this strategy that elevates the issue.

What are some of your communication tactics?

We have many: op-eds, letters to the editor, Women of the Storm [an organization that partnered with AWF], they go to Washington and bring things to the Legislature and Congressional delegations. We sound a constant drumbeat. We're just relentless. The other niche we fall into is this balanced approach to the problem. Louisiana is a laboratory for sustainability. Restoring wetlands is not strictly environmental. It's a working wetland and always will be. Oilmen are not going to move and, if they did, the economy would fall apart. AWF tries to take a balanced approach to the issue. We have America's Energy Coast and Pew Center on Global Climate Change at the same table with Shell and The Nature Conservancy. We bring these people together. The balance to take away is developing and carrying out strategic plan while being flexible. Use your main strategies, tactics, and goals. It keeps you focused.

APPENDIX O

COASTAL RESTORATION ORGANIZATIONAL QUOTES BY NEWSPAPERS

America's WETLAND Foundation in *The Advocate*:

R. King Milling: "The consequences of losing our precious resource will be felt far and wide."

Sidney Coffee: "All of this has to be in the national discussion."

Val Marmillion: "We hope this will be the start of a long-range program."

America's WETLAND Foundation in *The Times-Picayune*:

Norma Jane Sabiston: "We are reaching critical audiences everyday. So there's a real sentiment out there, but we have to continue to tell our story and convince Congress that we need this."

R. King Milling: "Every citizen of this country will feel the impact."

R. King Milling: "People hear about it all the time. There's an empathetic voice, but we need to ratchet it up a notch because every day we lose ground. You've got to continually reassert, readdress and put the issues back on the table."

R. King Milling: "The purpose is to issue a storm warning to the nation and the world about the catastrophic loss of America's wetland."

R. King Milling: "We have been trying to suggest that the energy coast states need to begin to think collectively about what our mutual interests are. It's time for us to think about those issues that impact all of us -- energy, fishing, navigation -- and to figure out if we can have a greater economic impact on decision making. Polls like this suggest that people do worry about these issues, and they think that something needs to be done."

Val Marmillion: "It raises awareness when people see the message with the tie, and the contributions area real benefit to programs on the ground. They're great-looking ties. I have one and wore it to a speech I gave this week."

Val Marmillion: "This is serious stuff we're talking about. Everything below I-10 is threatened. The answer is yes. You can't save all of it. Some communities we can't get back. The science and engineering are there to do it. Millions and millions of waterfowl come through here. This is one of the most important ecological regions of the world."

Val Marmillion: "All of these contributions are important. It's a leadership issue. It encourages more giving from our private sector."

Val Marmillion: "The state has been and will be a friend of the industry. But it's important that everyone understands the role the state plays in providing energy infrastructure. It's a national investment to protect what we call America's wetland."

Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana in *The Advocate*:

Mark Davis: “We definitely want to see more information about how and where the levees are going to be sited. I want to know what the end game is, not the first step.”

Mark Davis: “We see no vision coming from the White House. We think the plans are there with enough broadness to show that we have thought through our options.”

Mark Ford: “I think people are going to be upset. People don't want to hear that hurricanes do something good. We get a lot of sedimentation from hurricanes, there's no doubt about it. In the short term, it probably helps. But how often do we get a Katrina or Rita? Once every 10 or 15 years?”

Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana in *The Times-Picayune*:

Unidentified: “Since the 1930s, more than one million acres have disappeared, an area greater than the size of Rhode Island. Another 25 to 35 square miles of land is being lost every year.”

Mark Davis: “Anybody who now expects it to come in at anything less than three times that number doesn't understand how public works are built.”

Mark Davis: “How do we ask a senator from Montana or New Mexico or New York to help us when we haven't shown an interest in helping ourselves?”

Mark Davis: “If we can't change that, we don't win this fight. And we've never been able to fix that problem.”

Governor's Office of Coastal Activities in *The Advocate*:

Garret Graves: “They've talked to us about wanting to move forward aggressively.”

Garret Graves: “It's a good task to go through and reevaluate what's out there.”

Garret Graves: “As we move forward, we have to understand we won't always have 100 percent certainty. We're going to do diversions in Louisiana. Many people are trying to pitch this as an either/or. I don't believe that is the case.”

Garret Graves: “There has been criticism of the study because it doesn't account for the marsh growth that can keep up with relative sea level.”

Len Bahr: “I wanted Louisiana to be on the forefront. We have to most at risk so we should be as aggressive as any state. We decided to have this meeting and brainstorm. We wanted to get the principal stakeholders together to talk about real things we could do to affect hypoxia. A contribution is a contribution.”

Sidney Coffee: "We've known for a long time that the efforts must be combined and these two storms really forced the issue. It's a high priority for the governor because without protection, you're not going to have any economy. Everything hinges on this."

Sidney Coffee: "How can anyone say that hurricanes deposit sediment, and not river overflow, when we just lost 200 square miles of our wetlands? It's sediment redistribution, but that's not what we're looking for. The science article flies in the face of everything that has been studied and modeled. I don't believe we can depend on hurricanes to deposit sediment."

R. King Milling: "I hear the word 'collaboration' (with the state plan) but it is not there. We have a disaster down here. With business as usual in the corps, we might have to move everyone out of south Louisiana... We as a state don't have time to answer all of the questions."

Sidney Coffee: "The corps is lapsing back into the old policies and procedures."

Sidney Coffee: "Certainly, any delay is disappointing. There are no recommendations in it. So far, what we have is a report on a process, not a plan. Here we are two years later and we're getting a process. The federal government obviously has more resources to get it done, but I'm not so certain there is the overall political will."

Sidney Coffee: "I think the letter itself doesn't raise any new points."

Sidney Coffee: "I'm trying to decide what the use of this will be to Congress without recommendations. We're going to get kind of cranky if it doesn't include real recommendations. Are there going to be recommendations on the closure of MRGO?"

Sidney Coffee: "Is it good enough? No. It's a lot of federal processes that we're fighting along the way."

Sidney Coffee: "That's one opinion. I know there's a lot of different scientific interpretations of that. I think that there are many scientists out there who will say building levees isn't the only answer. There are very few win-wins out there. There are trade-offs in almost every part of this. For him to make a blanket statement that we're not paying attention, of course we're paying attention. I think policymakers are looking at everything at this point."

Sidney Coffee: "The near-term plan is now languishing in a Water Resources Development Act bill that will likely not pass again this year."

Sidney Coffee: "This would be the first time the state had oversight of this issue."

Governor's Office of Coastal Activities in *The Times-Picayune*:

Garret Graves: "The focus now is on the state using those resources wisely, moving from concept to construction."

Garret Graves: “The original project...was to cost \$150 million. Now the corps is calling for it to cost \$3 billion to \$8 billion. Our folks are saying they can do it for \$1.4 billion.”

Garret Graves: “We have very serious concerns about this whole issue. There never should have been circumstances where we have vessels of any size floating around that canal with those walls. They continue to be some of the most vulnerable parts of the hurricane-protection system.”

Garret Graves: “If we can extract 80 percent or greater amounts of sediment from the river and put it in strategic places, we can be more effective in replacing land. But we are going to have to prioritize. Will Louisiana look like it did in 1930? No, probably not. But is it possible for us to sustain a significant part of the coastal area in light of protected sea level rise and the erosion we're experiencing today? Yes.”

Sidney Coffee: “He was very excited over the prospects of doing something really wonderful with it. I am in tremendous hopes that ConocoPhillips understands what value this land is to us.”

Sidney Coffee: “She prides herself on being the oil and gas governor. But we've reached a tipping point. How can one state, especially a poor state like Louisiana, be expected to sustain an effort like that all on its own? It has the potential to be tied up legally for many, many years.”

Sidney Coffee: “Thank goodness. This is what the state has advocated for quite some time.”

Sidney Coffee: “This is a conceptual plan. We said from the very beginning, 'Don't get too bought into what you see at the moment.' Will the design have to be looked at very closely?... Yes. At the same time, I'm not going to suggest that those who have fought long and hard for Morganza-to-the-Gulf...that we're taking (it) out of the plan... That's just not going to happen.”

Sidney Coffee: “This is excellent, this is wonderful to see them wanting to participate in a physical way. My God, we're not turning away anything. This is not an altruistic, philanthropic endeavor. This is something that they need to have a viable seat at the table. We need to have meaningful conversations about sustaining America's very, very important energy coast.”

VITA

Stephanie Shaddock is a native of Lake Charles, Louisiana. She is the daughter of Steve and Cammie Shaddock and has a younger brother, Billy. After attending St. Louis Catholic High School, Stephanie received the TOPS Scholarship and continued her education at Louisiana State University studying journalism. She became a member of Kappa Delta Sorority. She graduated in May 2008 with a bachelor of arts in mass communication with minors in business administration and Spanish.

Stephanie decided to pursue her master's at LSU focusing on public relations. Her interests include crisis communication and public affairs. *Louisiana Communication Journal* published her research paper, "Perceptions of Louisiana State University's crisis communication plan after Hurricane Gustav," in 2009. She learned the importance of effective crisis communication and the effect hurricanes have on college students. Extensive traveling and fishing many coastlines around the world spurred Stephanie's interest in coastal restoration efforts and communication. After experiencing the damage first-hand of Hurricanes Katrina, Rita, Gustav, and Ike on her family's two coastal homes, Stephanie hopes to be a part of the coastal restoration solution.

Her interests include traveling, reading, painting, and fishing. She recently completed a half-marathon and plans to continue training for races. Currently, Stephanie is an intern with the Recreation and Park Commission for the Parish of East Baton Rouge (BREC) in the communication department. Upon graduation, Stephanie hopes to pursue a career in public relations.