



# Wisconsin DNR communications strategy reels in cost savings, engaged citizens



## Client Situation

From fishing and hunting regulations to air quality alerts and permit renewals, state natural resources departments across the nation have much to share with residents - and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) is no exception. Since much of the information is timely and can be of critical nature, such agencies must get messages out quickly and efficiently.

Realizing the importance of connecting with citizens, in 2009, the WDNR's Web Redesign project co-leads John Bushman and Margie Damgaard went looking for a more direct, cost-effective communications solution to replace the disjointed system of more than five different processes the organization had been using. Among the many considerations was the ability to better engage with people in all areas of public health, recreation, and regulatory topics.

## Solution

WDNR selected GovDelivery to manage the digital creation and delivery of the department's information directly to citizens, educators, and other interested parties. GovDelivery provides WDNR with the opportunity to efficiently manage its digital communication while offering citizens more subscription options of greater relevancy. Subscribers are able to select the specific topics on which they would like to receive updates and control how often email updates are sent to their inbox.

Examples of such relevant communications include ensuring those needing boat permits are notified before the expiration date, keeping people informed of new legislation, and letting workshop participants and local educators know about educational opportunities offered by the department. As with most state agencies, Damgaard said cost savings and improving employee efficiency were key goals when considering the service. Using digital communications rather than print publications helped the WDNR realize quick savings - in both money and staff time.

The WDNR implemented GovDelivery in February 2009, and Damgaard said it has been highly effective in achieving - and exceeding - the agency's expectations.

## Results

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources has established a system capable of communicating with nearly 140,000 subscribers simply, quickly and efficiently. This is a solution able to deliver targeted messages on more than 375 unique topics to interested citizens - a concept that intrigues and excites subscribers, inspiring each to subscribe to 80 topics on average.

As the department continues to move more of its communications to the GovDelivery solution, officials have come to realize the breadth of information that citizens desire to receive digitally. The last issue of *Dam Safety News* was published in 1996, but re-established as an electronic newsletter it has found its place as a necessary update for all dam owners and consultants.

"We had anticipated cost savings of \$100,000 in the first year, but we actually saved that in the first three months alone with GovDelivery," Damgaard said, noting that printing, postage, and graphic design work have been significantly reduced as more than 6.4 million messages were sent through GovDelivery during between Jan. 1, 2010 and March 31, 2011. "Employees no longer spend hours managing and maintaining email distribution lists, instead they strategize outreach opportunities satisfied knowing our subscribers are receiving our information. Likewise, our efforts have helped to improve the public perception of our department and build customer communities online."

