

# **“Love Seaweed, Love Sea Life” Outreach Campaign**

Galveston Park Board of Trustees





## **SITUATION**

Galveston Island is a popular beach destination, located on the Gulf Coast just 50 miles south of Houston. While the island receives visitors year-round, its peak months for visitation take place during summer when millions of visitors flock to its 32 miles of beaches. This heavy visitation period also coincides with the Gulf's heaviest time for seaweed, which typically washes up on Galveston's beaches May through August.

The Galveston Park Board of Trustees, which manages the island's public beach parks, does not remove seaweed from the beach because of its environmental benefits. Instead, it brushes seaweed away from the shoreline to create easier access to the Gulf for beachgoers. While some visitors don't seem to mind the seaweed, a portion of vocal visitors find offense to the sight and smell of seaweed, labeling Galveston's beaches as "dirty" in social media posts, complaints to the Park Board and other communications.

In addition, for legal and budget purposes, in 2012 the Park Board altered its seaweed policy to no longer provide seaweed maintenance services to beach areas outside its jurisdiction. This change most drastically impacted the stretches of beach on the East End and West End where beach house rental properties are present.

## **PR CHALLENGE**

Visitor displeasure with seaweed along with changes in the Park Board's seaweed policy have created a public relations challenge for the organization as it seeks to better the island's image in the minds of consumers and reduce negative word of mouth spread as it relates to the cleanliness of Galveston's beaches.

## **GOAL**

To meet the PR challenge outlined above, the Galveston Park Board/Galveston Island Convention & Visitors Bureau has developed the public relations campaign "Love Seaweed, Love Sea Life" in order to:

1. Educate visitors on the important role seaweed plays in the environment with the intent of changing negative perceptions
2. Inform the public about Park Board seaweed policies



## **AUDIENCE**

The key audiences for this public relations campaign include:

- Media (Galveston, Houston and Regional)
- Tourists (Current and Potential)
- Tourism Partners
- Local Community

## **MESSAGE**

Key messages for this campaign include:

- Seaweed is a good thing for Galveston's beaches. It provides an extensive ecosystem for sea life and serves as an essential sand erosion barrier.
- The Galveston Park Board does not remove seaweed from the beach due to its environmental benefits.
- Galveston uses environmentally friendly methods of maintaining the beaches under the jurisdiction of the Park Board.

## **OBJECTIVES**

During the 2013 beach season, seaweed-related public relations efforts will focus on achieving the following objectives:

1. Produce positive traditional media exposure for Park Board efforts related to seaweed maintenance and education. Generate **6 positive stories** in traditional media outlets during campaign.
2. Generate **500,000 media impressions/views** of our key messages from potential and regular visitors to Galveston via online and social media outlets.



3. Directly reach **30,000 potential or current beach visitors** with one or more of our key messages.

## **STRATEGIES**

The following strategies will guide public relations outreach during the “Love Seaweed, Love Sea Life” campaign to coincide with seaweed season:

- Generate positive publicity that includes the Park Board’s key messages via the development of new special events, story pitches, press releases, and targeted media relations.
- Directly communicate with consumers through a variety of entertaining and educational channels, with a special emphasis on beach-goers and West End property owners.

## **TACTICS**

The above strategies will be carried out using the following key public relations tactics:

- **Seaweed Art Contest** – The Park Board public relations department will develop a seaweed-themed art contest to garner public participation and draw press attention to the issue of seaweed. This exposure will create a platform to ultimately bring positive exposure to the organization’s key messages. We will draw attention with the award of significant prizes and partner with the Galveston Arts Center and college art programs in the Houston area.
- **Beach Outreach Days** – The Park Board public relations department will coordinate outreach days with TOP officers on June 29 and July 27 at Stewart Beach and East Beach. The public relations/marketing department will provide giveaway items and seaweed collateral to distribute to beach visitors. In addition to the TOP officers’ scheduled outreach days, the public relations department will distribute seaweed collateral at the following events:
  - SeaWalk & Run event at East Beach, July 13
  - Seaweed Art Contest Judging Event at East Beach Pavilion, August 3



- **Story Pitches/ Press Releases** – The Park Board public relations department will strategically pitch the following story angles to local media outlets:
  1. *Seaweed’s Positive Effects on the Beach* – A press release showing the cause and effect of leaving seaweed on the beaches, including a photo comparison from the previous year to current year showing the creation of new sand dunes.
  2. *Announcement of Beach Outreach Days* – A press release to notify the public about upcoming TOP Outreach Days and encourage attendance at the beach parks.
  3. *Seaweed Art Contest* – A series of press releases to announce the opening of the “Love Seaweed, Love Sea Life” Art Contest; the public voting event and a reveal of the winners.
  
- **Social Media Posts** – The Park Board public relations department will schedule a series of entertaining and educational posts about seaweed and sea life on its social media platforms to encourage consumer interaction and word-of-mouth buzz throughout the campaign, using the hash tag #LoveSeaweedLoveSeaLife.
- **Direct Mail** – The Park Board public relations department will prepare a direct mail piece about beach maintenance, seaweed facts and the economic impact of Galveston tourism to be delivered to 25,000 households as an insert in the City of Galveston water bill. (Completed May 2013)
- **Seaweed Brochures** – The Park Board public relations/marketing department will generate and provide hotel and lodging partners with seaweed brochures to disseminate to guests upon check in. Partners will track the number of brochures distributed during campaign period.

## EVALUATION

A variety of evaluation methods will be used to measure the quantifiable objectives outlined in this plan.

- **Media Exposure** – Media exposure will be measured using the Park Board’s Thomson Reuters Media Monitoring Service. “Traditional media” will be defined as print publications, print publications with an online presence, radio stations, and TV stations.

- **Media Impressions** – Media impressions/views of our key messages will be measured using a variety of methods including: print circulation, website visitation stats, TV viewership, radio listenership, and social media analytics.
- **Reach** – Consumer reach will be measured by tracking the number of marketing collateral and giveaways items distributed by Park Board staff and partners. A reporting system will be monitored by the organization’s public relations staff. The goal to reach 30,000 visitors represents approximately 5% of normal beach visitation in June and July combined.

## "Love Seaweed, Love Sea Life" Outreach Calendar

WEEK OF	ACTION ITEMS				
13-May	1st Distribution of seaweed water bill insert to Galveston residents				
27-May	2nd Distribution of seaweed water bill insert to Galveston residents				
3-Jun	Coordinate with Sand 'N Sea for tracking of seaweed brochure distribution		Order seaweed giveaway items, including new Clean, Green, Pristine water bottles		
10-Jun	Pitch story on seaweed's benefit from last year; dune creation	Finalize professional artists for Seaweed Art Contest judge panel; Create artist entry form; Finalize art contest awards	Confirm Seaweed Art Contest display at Aug. 24 Artwalk	Confirm TOP outreach days with Beach Patrol Chief	Confirm East Beach as venue location for Seaweed Art Contest
17-Jun	Distribute press release announcing opening of Seaweed Art Contest; Distribute flyers to GAC and Houston colleges		Social Media Posts to Twitter; Facebook, Pinterest and Instagram		
24-Jun	Distribute press release to announce TOP Outreach Days	Provide giveaways to TOP officers for June 29 outreach	Social Media Posts to Twitter; Facebook, Pinterest and Instagram		
1-Jul	Write a blog about sea turtles related to seaweed		Social Media Posts to Twitter; Facebook, Pinterest and Instagram		
8-Jul	Prepare for July 13 beach outreach during SeaWalk event		Social Media Posts to Twitter; Facebook, Pinterest and Instagram		



15-Jul	Distribute press release about public voting event for Seaweed Art Contest at East Beach Aug. 3	Social Media Posts to Twitter; Facebook, Pinterest and Instagram
22-Jul	Provide giveaways to TOP officers for July 27 outreach	Social Media Posts to Twitter; Facebook, Pinterest and Instagram
29-Jul	Finalize event details for art contest public voting event Prepare seaweed collateral and giveaways for outreach day	Social Media Posts to Twitter; Facebook, Pinterest and Instagram

5-Aug	Distribute press release revealing Seaweed Art Contest Winners	Social Media Posts to Twitter; Facebook, Pinterest and Instagram
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