Water -- Think USGS

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Issue/Challenges:

When an earthquake happens or volcano erupts there is only one group you look to – the USGS! The U.S. Geological Survey is the premier water science research agency within the Federal government and largest provider of hydrological data in the world. Each day, USGS hydrologists are achieving major breakthroughs in all aspects of water science ranging from water quality, streamflow monitoring, the energy-water-nexus and more. The challenge is that there are 25 other Federal agencies who are also involved in water issues.

The water science information produced by the USGS is used daily by the general public, emergency and resource managers, state and local governments, and many Federal agencies. USGS data, used by other agencies, are often featured as evidence and casework in many high-priority situations. However, because USGS does not manage or regulate policy, the agency often remains out of the news spotlight.

Even though we are equipped with all the tools necessary to succeed in advertising our great achievements in water science, where we need help as an agency is communicating our data to our stakeholders in a way that demonstrates how our information is vital to the success of many other well-known entities. Often, in an effort to communicate the full scope and breadth of our water-related achievements, we lose the compelling message that grabs our stakeholders on an emotional level. How do we raise the profile of the Water Mission Area with Congress, Cooperators, and the general public?

In this new age of social media, a world where anyone with a smartphone is both a journalist and publicist, the USGS has a great opportunity to reach out to a broad audience and communicate our messages directly. How can we best do that?

- How do we increase awareness of USGS water science among our stakeholders to elicit a reaction beyond an intellectual awareness?
- How do we build on the Open Water Data Initiative effort?
- How can we influence Congress, the public, and other stakeholders to recognize the need for funding our research in a concise, emotional way?
    - Why should our stakeholders care?
- How can we communicate the message to the “# Generation”?
    - How can we reach new users to promote our data?
- How can we demonstrate to our stakeholders their connection to the science?
    - How do we capitalize on the "YOU" that has been so effective with the "Did YOU feel it?" campaign?
    - How can we connect the stakeholder to the need for the research?
    - What is the "what's in it for YOU" angle?

    - "Water: Three days without it and you die."
- How can we maximize the return on investment we have made in our communication efforts?

As the leading water science agency in the world, it is important that people know how the information we provide is applicable to everyday life. **Water is key to life**, so look to USGS, the purest source for water information. Get the information straight from the tap.

Background Material/Resources:

- USGS Water: www.usgs.gov/water
- U.S. Geological Survey Water Science Strategy--Observing, Understanding, Predicting, and Delivering Water Science to the Nation: http://pubs.usgs.gov/circ/1383g/Cooperative Water Program: http://water.usgs.gov/coop/about/CWP.briefing.sheet.pdf
- All other verified data sources available

Expectations:

At the end of this scenario, Leadership 201 students should develop a strategic and user-friendly communications campaign that transcends the preexisting notion that there are better sources of water information available to the general public and our stakeholders. This plan should “excite” people about USGS water data, in a way that makes the thought of USGS synonymous with water (similar to our Earthquake Hazards program “Did You Feel It?” campaign: http://earthquake.usgs.gov/earthquakes/dyfi/).

Even with limited funding and resources, the USGS continues to produce more water data than any other Federal agency each year. Imagine how much more we could do if people really knew.