

Sanctuary Advisory Council

3rd Meeting of the Marketing Subcommittee

January 11, 2013 -- 1:00 to 3:00 pm

Santa Barbara Zoo, 500 Niños Drive, Santa Barbara, California

Final Meeting Notes

Members in attendance: Richard Block, Michael Cohen, Andrea Mills, Amanda Allen, Maria Petueli.

Sanctuary Staff: Julie Busek, Laura Francis, Shauna Bingham, Mike Murray, Darrell Gregg, Chris Mobley.

1. Facebook for CINMS

A. Brief Background, Context, Status (Sanctuary Staff & Superintendent)

Chris Mobley reported that a Facebook account will be set up for CINMS. There will be rules for how it is supposed to be properly used by a federal agency, and he hopes to see it become an effective tool for the sanctuary will being one that is efficient from a staffing perspective.

B. Subcommittee Member Suggestions and Recommendations for Success with Facebook

Michael Cohen emphasized that the Facebook world likes things that are “cool”, which is good because the sanctuary has so many “cool” aspects going for it. Everything should come with pictures, and video clips should be one minute or less.

Members that currently manage (or have staff that manage) Facebook accounts for their organizations commented on a concern raised about how to deal with unwanted and inappropriate posts. The mechanics of how that works were explained, with one important aspect being that most times it is easy to remove a post before your friends and followers notice it. Control the conversation to keep from getting bogged down. Advise that ongoing comments move offline to another venue. Don't engage in an argument. Also, the lifecycle for most posted material is so short, it was pointed out, so that even posts made by staff that aren't ideal will quickly drop away.

If content encountered is good, and helpful, you can easily repost it. It's all about pushing content out.

Staffing was discussed several times. The emphasis from the group seemed to be that devoted staffing must be given to this, that it does take some time to get good and proficient at managing Facebook, and that rotating the duty would mean breaking up of a consistent “voice” with the posts, and someone having to learn again with each rotation. That said, it was also shared that on a daily or weekly basis Facebook does not have to take too much time.

In terms of getting started, the group recommended getting the page up and running, and then growing into it. At the same time, it was suggested that we should begin with enough interesting content (e.g., photo galleries) so that we can more quickly attract followers. The group reflected on recent big events that would have pushed content out very

effective through Facebook: *George E. Billings* shipwreck discovery; IMO approval of shipping lane changes).

The group also discussed such issues as the best times of the day to post on Facebook in order to reach your audience, as well as the issue of posting photographs of people with proper permission. In that regard, many understood that the sanctuary would appropriately keep photos posted conservative.

The subcommittee also discussed how interactive posts on Facebook can be helpful. For example, the Santa Barbara Zoo has had contests involving Facebook fans posting their guesses on how much an elephant weighs, with some prizes involved. The Channel Islands National Park has been doing some “where in the park are you” types of posts with photos. Other ideas are the “critter of the day” or “site of the day”.

It was mentioned that perhaps many volunteers with the Channel Islands Naturalist Corps would enjoy posting their sanctuary trips, experiences and photos on the CINMS Facebook page.

There are analytics available with Facebook that can provide more detailed information about what your “friends” are really interested in, which can be valuable information. Rich Block emphasized that it is important to think about what you’re going to analyze and learn from Facebook use and the profiles of those that interact with you.

Maria Petueli noted that she has seen Facebook used to recognize, thank and promote corporate and other sponsors, which can have a good effect. Amanda Allen added that she has seen Foundation-based pledge drives enhanced through Facebook use.

It was also suggested that to only think of Facebook as a communication tool to help raise general awareness about the sanctuary would be to fall short and miss out on greater opportunities, such as building a coalition of supporters that may be willing to take action on your behalf, to potentially include fundraising, writing letters on behalf of the sanctuary program, or offering other forms of support. You will start out small with it and then, if done right, the number of friends and followers will rise and when it surpasses 10,000 you begin to have some leverage with that kind of status and following. This is what will ultimately get you to a place where you can be more effective with fundraising, sponsorships, and beneficial partnership arrangement.

The group also talked briefly about concerns that could arise if the sanctuary appears to be showing favoritism to organizations or businesses that it becomes Facebook “friends” with and that it might occasionally “plug” through online posts. The sanctuary will continue to try to be fair and open, but some complaints might be inevitable.

The group looked briefly at the Thunder Bay National Marine Sanctuary’s Facebook page and agreed that they are probably offering a good model for what’s possible and successful.

Final thoughts on this including re-emphasizing the need to get the CINMS Facebook page up and running soon – not letting a long preparation and planning horizon keep it on hold. There is a lot of good content available. Another closing thought was a reiteration about the importance of making this a dedicated part of someone’s job at CINMS.

2. Convention & Visitor Bureaus

Subcommittee Member Suggestions and Recommendations for Successful Outreach and Connection with these organizations

Mike Murray explained that at the recent national SAC Summit, he and SAC Chair Eric Kett heard a lot about the importance of connecting sanctuaries to the tourism, visitor, and recreational industries. Mike explained that Eric Kett would like to extend an invitation for representatives from local Convention and Visitors Bureaus (CVBs) to attend a future SAC meeting, teach us about how they market the destination, and then engage them in discussions about what the sanctuary may have to offer to enhance their marketing efforts.

Chris Mobley liked the idea of possibly setting up a panel of visitor bureau representatives, including perhaps someone from the Monterey or Santa Cruz area with experience marketing some aspects of that sanctuary. Michael Cohen thought something like that could work, but emphasized that it could not take the place of sanctuary staff becoming members of these groups (approx. \$400/year). He knows people at the Santa Barbara CVB that are really good at what they do and could be very helpful in discussions about how to connect with the sanctuary. With regard to what the sanctuary can bring to these organizations, Chris pointed out that sanctuaries do get a lot of very visible media attention, which CVBs would value. The group talked about other aspects of the sanctuary that should hold some appeal to CVBs, including the visitor centers we enhance with exhibits and kiosks. It was suggested that Chris Mobley should attend and maybe present the sanctuary to the CVBs.

3. Administrative Business and Next Steps

Michael Cohen offered to provide a subcommittee report at the next SAC meeting.

The Subcommittee agreed to review the initial/draft CINMS Facebook page, when it's ready.

The Subcommittee can reconvene to evaluate the page and help move it forward successfully. The date for that future Subcommittee meeting has not yet been set.