



Media Engagement Protocol

Updated July 2019

Upper Neuse River Basin Association Media Engagement Protocol

Prepared by HDR





Media Engagement Protocol

This protocol describes the Upper Neuse River Basin Association’s (UNRBA) approach to media relations during the reexamination of the Falls Lake Nutrient Management Strategy and Rules. Its dual focus – on proactive outreach and post-publication education – aims to encourage timely, accurate media coverage to give audiences the factual foundations they need to understand the reexamination process and its outcomes.

The Protocol will be administered by the Executive Director, support contractors, subject matter expert contractors, and UNRBA member representatives. It may be adjusted as necessary with Board approval.

I. Roles and Responsibilities

The media management team will include the following individuals.

Table 1: Media Management Team

Role	Responsibility
Executive Director	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Serves as the point of contact for reporters and news outlets.• Serves as the UNRBA’s signatory on written material developed for media outreach.• Responds to media inquiries with support from HDR.
HDR Strategic Communications	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Creates material for proactive media outreach per scope.• Monitors info@unrba.org for media inquiries and forwards requests to Executive Director.• Assists the Executive Director with novel media responses as scope allows.
UNRBA Executive Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reviews proposed responses to media inquiries as described in this protocol.
UNRBA Chair	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Approves proposed responses to media inquiries between UNRBA Board meetings when Board-approved material is not sufficient.
UNRBA Board	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Approves proactive communication tools developed by HDR.• Provides local reporters’ contact information to the Executive Director.• Leverages existing media relationships to encourage coverage (e.g., of their home jurisdictions’ nutrient management achievements).• Reviews and approves responses that are referred by the Executive Committee.

The **Executive Director**, with support from HDR, will act as the UNRBA’s point of contact with the media and manage day-to-day media interactions as authorized under this protocol. The Executive Director has the authority to respond to media inquiries using Board-approved communication tools and technical



Media Engagement Protocol

Updated July 2019

reports, but the Director will seek approval before addressing issues that have not been specifically covered in approved materials or that involve policy positions that have not been established by the Board.

The **HDR Strategic Communications** team will develop proactive media outreach resources and assist with their distribution to local news outlets. The HDR Strategic Communications Lead will assist the Executive Director with additional media inquiry responses as the communications support scope permits and as authorized under this protocol. The team will be responsible for developing a media contact list with the support of Board members and jurisdictional staff representatives, documenting contacts with the media, and tracking stories published. (See Appendix A for the structure of the media tracking spreadsheet.) HDR will report on these interactions in quarterly outreach analytics summaries.

When a media response must be made within 24 hours, the Executive Director will coordinate with the **UNRBA Executive Committee** (officers of the UNRBA) via email or conference call to determine if a response is appropriate without specific Board approval. The **Chair of the Board** will be responsible for approving the proposed response for distribution within 24 hours or providing alternate direction to the Executive Director. Alternate direction not contemplated by this protocol will require Board approval.

Members of the **UNRBA Board** will be responsible for approving all proactive communication tools developed for the UNRBA and novel inquiry responses referred to the Board by the Executive Committee. At the Executive Director's request, Board members will provide, as appropriate, contact information for reporters and media outlets with whom they already have strong relationships. They will also draw on their existing relationships with members of the media to help the Executive Director encourage coverage on topics and developments that are consistent with Board objectives for media interaction.

II. Responding to Media Inquiries

When a member of the media contacts the UNRBA for information or comment, the following procedures will guide response.

1. Inquiry Referred to Executive Director

All media inquiries – including email messages, phone calls, voicemails, and in-person requests for information or interviews – will be forwarded to the Executive Director and info@unrba.org as soon as they are received.

Upon receipt, HDR will document the inquiry in the media tracking spreadsheet and recommend a response type to the Executive Director (i.e., pre-approved material versus novel response).



Media Engagement Protocol

Updated July 2019

2. *Pre-Approved Responses*

If the inquiry can be satisfied with pre-approved material, the Executive Director will deliver the response immediately, notify Executive Committee of the action, and proceed to step six.

3. *Novel Responses*

If the media inquiry requires a novel response, the Director will reply to the reporter to acknowledge receipt and assure a response within three days. The Director, with assistance from HDR, will draft a proposed response.

4. *Executive Committee Review*

Prior to responding to the inquiry, the Director will communicate with the Executive Committee. The Director will forward the proposed response to the Executive Committee within 24 hours. If the Executive Committee concurs with the proposed response, the Director will provide the response to the media individual making the inquiry. If the Executive Committee requires revisions to the proposed response and the response is delayed, the Executive Director will notify the reporter of the expected change in response time.

5. *Board Approval Option*

If the Executive Committee determines that Board approval is needed to provide the recommended response, the Executive Director will arrange a Board session to consider the matter. The Executive Director will also contact the inquiring media representative to inform them that response has been delayed.

6. *Response Tracking*

The Executive Director will CC info@unrba.com on email responses or notify HDR of the response for logging in the media tracking spreadsheet.

Using Google Alerts, HDR will monitor media outlets for confirmation of the published or posted article/interview.

III. Outreach and Education

The UNRBA's media engagement strategy includes two foci: proactive outreach and post-publication education.

Proactive Media Outreach

The UNRBA will make every effort to provide accurate, easy-to-understand information on its reexamination efforts to members of the media using the strategies in the table below.



Media Engagement Protocol

Updated July 2019

Table 2: Proactive Outreach Tactics

Outreach Tool	Description
Media Information Packets	HDR will develop information packets for approval by the UNRBA Board and send the final packets to members of the media to inform them about the work of the UNRBA and the reexamination effort. The information in the packets will be reviewed for accuracy on a quarterly basis and revised as needed.
Meetings	Outreach to members of the media will be accompanied by an offer to meet in person. During these meetings, the Executive Director will deliver information about the UNRBA consistent with the pre-approved materials available.
Press Releases	<p>Each milestone in the reexamination process will be announced in a short press release. HDR will draft press releases as the communications scope allows for review and approval by the Executive Director with input from the Executive Committee.</p> <p>Based on specific jurisdictional procedures, UNRBA members may share the news releases through their own communication channels to expand distribution. The Executive Director will notify members of press release dates and encourage distribution when relevant.</p>
Op-Ed Pieces	The Executive Director may recommend publicly correcting misinformation on Falls Lake nutrient management issues or the work of the UNRBA through an op-ed piece. The review and approval process for op-eds will follow the media inquiry novel response process described above.
Event Invitations	Members of the media will be invited to attend UNRBA stakeholder events. The invitations will be sent via email to the individuals on the media contact list developed by HDR with assistance from UNRBA Board members.

Post-Publication Education

When an article on the UNRBA is published, the Executive Director will contact the reporter to thank him or her for covering nutrient management within 24 business hours. If the article or story was accurate, the thank-you note will be accompanied by an offer to meet to discuss UNRBA efforts further or with an invitation to attend an upcoming stakeholder event.

If the article contained misleading or incorrect information, the Executive Director will provide factual corrections and a copy of the media outreach packet along with the thank-you note. The Executive Director will also offer to meet with the reporter to discuss the UNRBA's mission and goals in more detail. The Executive Director will inform the Executive Committee of the plan to respond to the



Media Engagement Protocol

Updated July 2019

reporter and, if appropriate, the Chair or another member of the Executive Committee will participate in the meeting.

The Executive Director will CC info@unrba.org on all follow-up emails or send an email to the HDR Strategic Communications Lead to provide notice of responses delivered through other channels. HDR will document the interactions in the media management spreadsheet for reporting in quarterly outreach analytics summaries.

Coverage Tracking

HDR will track media mentions using Google Alerts. HDR will forward media mentions that are relevant to the work of the UNRBA and the reexamination to the Executive Director and record them in the media tracking spreadsheet for inclusion in the quarterly outreach analytics reports.

Media mentions will be tracked using these Google Alerts search terms:

Google Alert Terms	
"Upper Neuse River Basin Association"	"Falls Lake" AND "nutrient management"
"Falls Lake" AND "algae"	"Falls Lake" AND "pollution"
"Falls Lake" AND "revise"	"Falls Lake" AND "reexamine"
"Falls Lake" AND "drinking water"	"Falls Lake" AND "nitrogen" OR "phosphorus"



Media Engagement Protocol

Updated July 2019

Appendix A: Media Tracking Spreadsheet Structure

Tab 1: Media Inquiries

- Reporter name
- Email address
- Phone number
- Date of inquiry
- Inquiry content
- Response date
- Response content

Tab 2: Media Coverage

- News outlet
- Author name
- Story date
- Story URL
- Thank-you email date
- Thank-you email content