

Wetland Ecology Garden



Outcome Report

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Envisioned as a synthesis of an engaging classroom, a sustainable stormwater management system, and a natural retreat, the Wetland Ecology Garden at the High Plains Environmental Center has become more than a sum of those parts. At its ribbon-cutting ceremony this coming spring, residents of High Plains Village will have a new tool to learn about their local ecosystem while addressing the practical issue of preventing flooding and creating habitat for birds, amphibians, and other wildlife.



Gardener Jim Tolstrup

Overview

The High Plains Environmental Center (HPEC), based in High Plains Village at Centerra in Loveland, CO, is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization devoted to preserving nature and natural habitat in harmony with thriving human development. HPEC works to engage developers, builders, businesses, and residents in creating a 'living laboratory' of community design, sustainable development, and eco-literacy.

Project Goals As an element of the overall design and planning of HPEC, the Wetland Ecology Garden is designed with a multitude of functions in mind. On the surface, it is a beautiful garden and a retreat for residents and employees of local businesses. It is also a living classroom which demonstrates the effects of

soil moisture, edge complexity, and bottom flatness on species distribution. The most groundbreaking aspect of the garden, though, is that it functions as a model for vital and effective stormwater drainage systems that create permeable surfaces for water to flow and restore habitat that is often lost in development. The goal of this project is to prove this as a feasible model for developments across the country.

Outcomes

Web Traffic This project served as a test for the new community building and fundraising tools on the Beanstalk Foundation website. The project's profile included videos, budgets, strategy, and the tools to share the project on a number of social media outlets, including

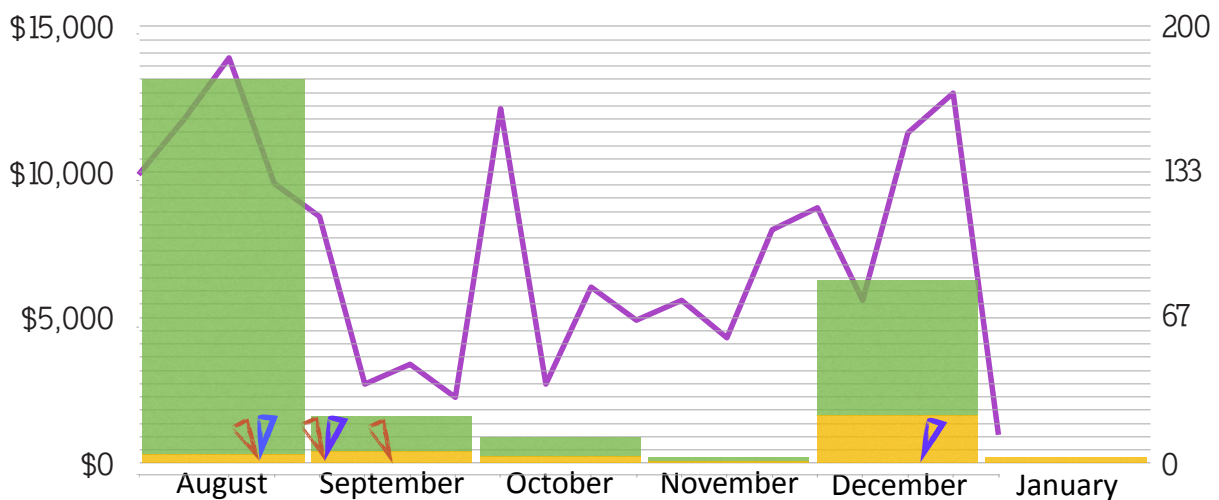


Figure 1: Timeline of web traffic and contributions for August 11 to January 7. Bars (■) depict the total dollars contributed per month, with community dollars in yellow and matching in green. The purple line (—) is page views for the same time period. Carrots indicate dates for email blasts (↘) and relevant Facebook posts (↙).

Facebook, Twitter, and email. From our analytics, we see that the greatest sources of traffic on the project page (www.friendsofbeanstalk.org/hpec) were Facebook, HPEC's website (www.suburbitat.org), direct visits and Google, in that order. Users primarily used the HPEC profile on the Beanstalk site as a means to contribute money, but many users took the opportunity to visit the videos tab, where users spent an average of 2:01. On the project details, users spent an average of 1:40.

Email blasts (Red carrots in Figure 1) were sent on the following dates:

- August 19: To HPEC board
- September 3: Jim to friends in HPEC community
- September 13: Joe Knopinsky to McWhinney

The HPEC board also emailed their communities individually, though we do not have access to the dates of these messages.

Fundraising Before beginning the project, HPEC estimated its total cost at \$22,435, including signage, excavation, construction and building materials. To

help fund the project and encourage the High Plains community to get involved, HPEC secured a 3:1 matching grant of \$16,500 from a generous local donor. In addition to the matching grant, Jim and his team earned a \$3,000 seed grant from Beanstalk to begin fundraising. This seed grant was matched 3:1, effectively making it a \$12,000 starting point.

The fundraising timeline is detailed in Figure 1, and also includes website traffic data for the project page. Because of the matched seed grant, fundraising appears highly skewed toward the beginning of the timeline, though the project received a few large contributions in December as well.

Expenses are shown in Table 1. Primary expenses include excavation of the site, materials for the pathway, boardwalk, plants, and project management. A comparison of income vs expenses is available at the bottom of Table 1. Community contributions exceeded project expenses by \$490.71. This overage will serve as a seed grant for HPEC's next project, set to begin in the spring of 2011.

Month	Community	Partners
August	\$291.00	\$12,876.00
September	\$402.00	\$1,200.00
October	\$217	\$651.00
November	\$50	\$153.00
December	\$1,652	\$4,620.00
January	\$200.00	\$0.00
Total Contributions (Community and Partners)	\$22,312.00	

Volunteers and In-Kind Donations Much of the labor for the Wetland Ecology Garden came from volunteers. In fact, Jim estimates that volunteers contributed 1,128 hours of time to the project, worth \$21,172.56. The biggest contributors of volunteer hours were Intel (640 hours), Brethren Church (288 hours), and CSU RamServe (200 hours).

The project received in-kind donations from two local businesses, as well. Landcape Design Group contributed twelve hours of their time, and Mike McBride of BHA Landscape Design contributed fifteen hours toward creating a poster for the project. Jim values these in-kind donations at \$945 total.

Vendor	Expense	Category
Crystal Landscape Supplies	\$6,599.36	Materials
Ft. Collins Wholesale Nursery	\$1,327.90	Materials (plants)
Sunstate Equipment	\$1,180.01	Excavating
Richard Bath Excavating	\$3,832.00	Excavating
JR Oldham	\$1,170.00	Project Design and Management
Valley Crest	\$2,746.50	Contracted Install
Home Depot	\$4,061.07	Boardwalk
CPS	\$587.95	Irrigation
Reprographics	\$316.50	Signs
Total Expenses	\$21,821.29	

Conclusions

The Wetland Ecology Garden served as an excellent test case for both HPEC and Beanstalk. For HPEC, it was a chance to assess the giving ability of their community and understand the scope of projects possible in the future. This will help Jim and his team as they move toward planning the greenhouse they will begin in the spring. As Beanstalk's first project on the new website, it was an exceptional opportunity to see how users interacted with the web tools we have created. The Beanstalk team will use the data from this to improve the user experience before additional projects go live, hopefully improving donation data and user retention.

Jim, the HPEC staff, and Beanstalk would like to thank everyone who made this a reality, we hope to see you again in the spring!

Total Contributions	\$22,312.00
Total Expenses	\$21,821.29
Income less Expenses	\$490.71

Table 1: Comparison of contributions and expenses between August 2010 and January 2011