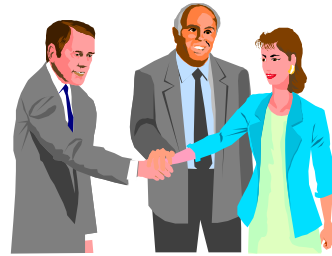




## STUDENT VERSION

### GYPSY MOTH AND PUBLIC RELATIONS



**MAIN IDEA:** The students will develop a public relations

program for their community. They will determine what people know about the Gypsy Moth, where information is available, and how serious is the problem for today and in the future.

We've seen those little orange cardboard triangles.....So what? We've heard that this gypsy moth is pretty bad.....So what isn't now days? Isn't this just another one of those causes? So why do they spray that stuff over my property.....I don't like it! Maybe if they'd leave things alone we wouldn't have all these problems.....Nature can take care of itself. Why don't you spend some time and money solving real problems.....like what in the world is eating all the leaves on my trees?!?

The Gypsy Moth is a part of Wisconsin and we must learn how to live with it and manage it. How the general public perceives the problem will determine what action can be taken by municipalities and government agencies. Learning to manage the damage of the gypsy moth is important in maintaining a healthy stand of trees in Wisconsin for wildlife, industry, tourism and personal pleasure.

**Information** will be one of the main tools used in slowing the spread and managing the damage of the gypsy moth. Where we get the information and how we pass it on to the public will be an important step in both of these goals.

We must ask four basic questions. 1) What do people already know? 2) What do people need to know? 3) Where can we get information? 4) How do we pass the information along?

#### **1. What do people already know?**

There are a variety of techniques available for determining the level of a target population's knowledge about a subject. Surveys are a frequently used tool for determining this. Surveys can be formal or informal and can be delivered by mail, by phone or in person. Surveys can be in the form of questionnaires or opinionnaires. Questionnaires will ask specific questions about a problem or event. They are used for collecting facts. Opinionnaires are used to measure the beliefs, attitudes and opinions of a population regarding a specific problem or issue. Often, a combination of these types of questions will be asked.

You must also determine exactly what information you are seeking. Do you want to check peoples knowledge or their opinions. You must ask questions that can be answered simply and clearly.

## **2. What do people need to know?**

Does the general public need to know all of the lifecycle stages of the gypsy moth? Probably not, but they should be able to identify all of the life stages. Should they understand the damage they cause? Yes. Should the average homeowner in Wisconsin know how to inspect his/her property for evidence of gypsy moths? Yes, if we hope to slow the spread.

Following careful analysis of the surveys, we can determine what kind of action to take. Do people need to be shown pictures of the gypsy moth and caterpillar? Do they need instruction on how to inspect their property? Do they need some information about the danger of the gypsy moth? Do they understand the method that is used to control the gypsy moth?

## **3. Sources of Information**

Information is readily available today from a variety of sources. A telephone call to your local university extension office, DNR field office, or Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection will provide you with information about gypsy moth activity in your area. On a larger scale, the United States Forest Service, the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection or the Department of Natural Resources will be able to provide a wider base of information.

Information is available by personal conversation with resource people, documents and publications and electronic resources, such as internet. The next step in your public relations campaign is to make this information available and useful to the citizens in your locale.

## **4. Disseminating Information**

Information must be presented in a way that is convenient and understandable to the recipient. It must be clear, concise and direct. Brochures can be a good way of presenting a large quantity of information. They allow for pictures and graphics and are easy to understand. Public service announcements on TV and radio help to keep the subject on people's minds. Newspaper articles provided the public with timely information that is very localized.

The methods used will depend on the type of message you are sending and the level of awareness of the general public. You will probably need to look at and develop a variety of messages using different media to reach the majority of the public.

Information will be a major tool in the battle to slow the spread of the gypsy moth. The public must be able to identify and understand the issues and the danger of this pest. Different segments of the population (urban, suburban and rural) as well as different

geographic locations will require different methods of collecting and disseminating information.

### **EXERCISES**

1. Using the internet, compile a list of resources of information about gypsy moths.
2. Develop and deliver a survey that can be used to collect information in your school or in your community. Analyze the results of that survey and make recommendations based on the results.
3. Develop a brochure that informs and also notes concerns of the people about gypsy moths.
4. Identify the concerns voiced by the public in regards to gypsy moths and the control of gypsy moths.
5. Interview someone working in the timber, landscaping, or natural resources industry. Also might consider people working in plant nursery, in Christmas tree production, as consulting foresters or as arborists. Find out their perspectives on the gypsy moths.

