

## INTERVIEW GUIDE

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The intention of the semi-structured interviews will be to engage in a conversation with each interviewee (in contrast to information collection using a survey instrument). Interviews are designed to be completed in no more than 30 minutes by drawing on the list of questions below as appropriate to the particular interviewee's area of involvement or interest in beach hazards.

### **State DNR/DEQ, Park Personnel, Sea Grant**

*Purpose:* These interviews are intended to gather input from people in the agencies in locations throughout the Great Lakes region, as well as confirm what beach hazard messaging systems are already widely in use in order to better coordinate and synchronize messages.

*Background:* The Great Lakes are home to many different and diverse beach types and formations. Some, such as the beaches near Marquette have small islands connected to land with sandbars; fast-moving channel currents can wash over these partially submerged isthmuses, sweeping waders off the sandbar and into open water. Beachgoers on the Eastern shore of Lake Michigan, however, face the danger of structural currents, which can pull swimmers towards dangerous rocks, and then propel them thousands of feet out into open water. Additionally, throughout the Great Lakes, the size and shape of the lake basins generate choppy, forceful, short-period waves. These waves can easily exhaust swimmers, especially those not native to the region. Unfortunately, each of these hazards affect different regions to different extents, and, further, each has different escape methods, so creating a universal escape method may be very difficult.

1. What do you see as the most dangerous swimming-related hazards in your region of the Great Lakes?
2. What passive (i.e., posted) warnings does your region have to warn beachgoers about these dangers?
3. Are there any active campaigns ongoing in your region to educate the public about these dangers?
  - 3.1. National scale? e.g., NWS WFO, Red Cross, USLA?
  - 3.2. Municipal scale? e.g., town website has a text alert service.
  - 3.3. Something in between? e.g., BeachCast
4. Are there other, less dangerous hazards in your region (that may be more important elsewhere)?
  - 4.1. Are there warnings (any kind) about those hazards in your regions?
5. What are the most common messages/avenues for communicating beach hazards?
6. In your opinion, what are the most effective messages/avenues?
  - 6.1. Which elements? (e.g., web alerts, easy-to-remember slogans, compelling visuals, etc.)
  - 6.2. Which media? (e.g., signs, pamphlets, social media, newspaper, etc.)
  - 6.3. Which goal? (e.g., education, current avoidance, current escape, promoting life jacket use , etc.)

7. To what extent are you involved in actively educating others about beach hazards?
8. What lessons have you learned from your outreach and education efforts?
9. In your opinion, what are the biggest hurdles to effective hazard communication?
10. What demographic do you find to be most at-risk in your region?
  - 10.1. Are current posted warnings, outreach campaigns, or other education strategies targeted at that demographic?
11. What demographic groups do you think are most in need of better outreach or more targeted communication efforts?
  - 11.1. How would you recommend doing so?
    - 11.1.1. Specific avenues.
    - 11.1.2. Specific messages.
12. Do you have recommendations for how to craft these messages to best *prevent potential drowning incidents*.
13. Do you feel it's more effective to try to educate people about *avoiding* hazardous conditions or about how to *escape* from hazardous conditions (e.g., currents) once in them?
14. Do you have recommendations for how to disseminate these messages to be optimally effective at reaching the most at-risk demographics?
  - 14.1. Age?
    - 14.1.1. Parents of young children (pre-teen and younger)
    - 14.1.2. Teens and young adults (NOTE TO INTERVIEWER—15-30 years old is most at-risk from Lit-Review)
    - 14.1.3. Seniors
  - 14.2. Gender? (NOTE TO INTERVIEWER—Lit-Review says males tend to outnumber females in drowning incidence)
  - 14.3. Race/Ethnicity? (NOTE TO INTERVIEWER— some potential groups which the Lit-Review has highlighted below)
    - 14.3.1. Hispanics/Latinos as well as Asian Americans (particularly Vietnamese), or other immigrant groups who may not have highly proficient English language skills
    - 14.3.2. Blacks/African Americans, who, statistically, are more likely to have poorer swimming skills.
    - 14.3.3. White demographic groups, who still represent the largest beach-going population by sheer number.

### **Great Lakes Tourism**

*Purpose:* These interviews are intended to determine the prevalence of tourism to the Great Lakes region's beaches by individuals *not* native to that region, as well as the outreach and warnings posted by these tourism agencies (if any exist).

*Background:* Local residents may be quite familiar with the currents and waves in the Great Lakes, tourists from as close as a few towns over to across the country may consider the risk associated with swimming in these waters to be significantly smaller than the risks associated in the ocean. This lack of knowledge about the dangers themselves may lead to more incidents, and lack of comprehension about them may lead to a higher rate of fatalities, compared to locals. Tourism agencies some duty to properly warn tourists about any dangers they may face while travelling, but also have some incentive to under-exaggerate the scope of those hazards.

### CUSTOMER INFORMATION

1. What proportion of your customers is native to:
  - 1.1. The Great Lakes region generally? (state-by-state, especially Michigan if they have that information)
  - 1.2. Neighboring states
  - 1.3. Canada (bordering the great Lakes)
  - 1.4. Further afield.
2. In what season do most of them travel to the Great Lakes region? (Summer, winter, fall, spring).
3. For what purpose do most of your customers travel to the Great Lakes region?:
  - 3.1. Go to the beach?
  - 3.2. Go hiking? (or other non-beach-related nature-tourism)
  - 3.3. Visit relatives?
  - 3.4. Site-see in Chicago?
  - 3.5. Other?
4. What can you say about the demographic groups that best describe your customers?

#### CURRENT BEACH HAZARDS AND TRAVEL ADVISORIES

1. How has your agency dealt with the tension between attracting tourists and effectively warning them about local dangers (of any kind or specific to swimming-related hazards)?
  - 1.1. "Qualified" recommendations?
  - 1.2. Safety disclaimers?
  - 1.3. Links to larger, more complex websites or publications?
2. Does your agency publicize or recommend any surfing "spots" on the Great Lakes?
  - 2.1. Does your agency offer any guidance about "surfing safe"?
  - 2.2. Does your agency offer an alternative set of (safer) beaches considered more suitable for families rather than surfing enthusiasts?
3. What do you see as the most dangerous swimming-related hazards in (your region of) the Great Lakes?
  - 3.1. Does your agency post any travel advisories about these hazards? If so, please describe.
4. What posted or passive warnings does your region have to warn beachgoers about these dangers (not published by your agency)?
  - 4.1. Does your agency point tourists to those warnings in any way (e.g. a link to NOAA/NWS's Rip Current Portal)
5. Are there any active campaigns ongoing in your region to educate the public about these dangers?
  - 5.1. Does your agency point tourists to those campaigns (e.g., MyBeachCast app)?
6. Are there other, less dangerous hazards in your region (that may be more important elsewhere)?
  - 6.1. Are there (any kind) warnings about those hazards in your regions?
  - 6.2. Does your agency point tourists to them in any way?

#### CRAFTING NEW/BETTER MESSAGES

1. What are the most common messages/avenues for communicating beach hazards?
2. In your opinion, what are the most effective messages/avenues?
  - 2.1. Which elements? (e.g., web alerts, easy-to-remember slogans, bright colors, etc.)
  - 2.2. Which media? (e.g., signs, pamphlets, social media, newspaper, etc.)
  - 2.3. Which goal? (e.g., education, hazard avoidance, current escape, promoting life jacket use, etc.)
3. To what extent are you involved in actively educating others about beach hazards?

4. What lessons have you learned from your outreach and education efforts?
5. In your opinion, what are the biggest hurdles to effective hazard communication?
6. What demographic do you find to be most at-risk in your region?
  - 6.1. Are current posted warnings, outreach campaigns, or other education strategies targeted at that demographic?
7. What demographic groups do you think are most in need of better outreach or more targeted communication efforts?
  - 7.1. How would you recommend doing so?
    - 7.1.1. Specific avenues.
    - 7.1.2. Specific messages.
8. Do you have recommendations for how to disseminate these messages to best reach the most at-risk demographics?
  - 8.1. Age?
    - 8.1.1. Parents of young children (pre-teen and younger)
    - 8.1.2. Teens and young adults (NOTE TO INTERVIEWER— LitReview identifies 15-30 years old as most at-risk)
    - 8.1.3. Seniors
  - 8.2. Gender? (NOTE TO INTERVIEWER—Lit-Review says males tend to outnumber females in drowning incidence)
  - 8.3. Race/ethnicity? (NOTE TO INTERVIEWER—some potential groups which the Lit-Review has highlighted below)
    - 8.3.1. Hispanics/Latinos as well as Asian Americans (particularly Vietnamese, I think), or other immigrant groups who may not have highly proficient English language skills
    - 8.3.2. Blacks/African Americans, who, statistically, are more likely to have poorer swimming skills.
    - 8.3.3. White demographic groups, who still represent the largest beach-going population by sheer number.

### **Red Cross/USLA**

*Purpose:* These interviews are intended to determine the scope of two national-scale NGOs in saving lives at the beaches of the Great Lakes Region. Both may be instrumental education and outreach partners later on.

*Background:* Red Cross has many local chapters throughout the Great Lakes region, but may not be terribly focused on rip currents and swimming-related hazards, even when they do run “summer safety campaigns.” On the flip side, USLA works exclusively with beach- and swimming-related hazards, but may not have the most effective or targeted campaigns in the region.

1. What do you see as the most dangerous swimming-related hazards in (your region of) the Great Lakes?
2. What posted or passive warnings does the region have to warn beachgoers about these dangers?
3. Are there any national campaigns ongoing in the region to educate the public about these dangers?
  - 3.1. Does your organization directly or indirectly support any of these efforts?
4. Are there other, less dangerous hazards in your region (that may be more important elsewhere)?
  - 4.1. Are there (any kind) warnings about those hazards in your regions?

5. What are the most common messages/avenues for communicating warnings and educational material about any type of hazards?
  - 5.1. Specifically beach- or swimming-related?
6. In your opinion, what are the most effective messages/avenues?
7. Which elements? (e.g., web alerts, easy-to-remember slogans, bright colors, etc.)
8. Which media? (e.g., signs, pamphlets, social media, newspaper, etc.)
9. Which goal? (e.g., education, current avoidance, current escape, promoting life jacket use, etc.)
10. To what extent is *your organization* involved in actively educating others about beach hazards in the Great Lakes Region?
  - 10.1. How geographically specific are your messages:
    - 10.1.1. Regionwide?
    - 10.1.2. Statewide?
    - 10.1.3. Citywide?
    - 10.1.4. Single beach?
  - 10.2. How hazard-specific are your messages:
    - 10.2.1. General “read posted warnings” kinds of messages?
    - 10.2.2. Moderately specific, but non-technical advice (e.g., wear sunscreen of at least SPF 40)?
    - 10.2.3. Specific and technical (e.g., swim parallel to the shore to escape a rip current)?
11. What lessons have you learned from your outreach and education efforts?
12. In your opinion, what are the biggest hurdles to effective communication about beach hazards?
13. What demographic do you find to be most at-risk in the region?
14. Are current posted warnings, outreach campaigns, or other education strategies targeted at that demographic?
15. What demographic groups do you think are most in need of better outreach or more targeted communication efforts?
16. How would you recommend doing so?
  - 16.1.1. Specific avenues?
  - 16.1.2. Specific messages?

#### CRAFTING NEW MESSAGES

1. Do you have recommendations for how to craft these messages to best *prevent potential drowning incidents*?
2. Do you feel it's more effective to try to educate people about *avoiding* hazardous conditions or about how to *escape* from hazardous conditions (e.g., currents) once in them?
3. Do you have recommendations for how to disseminate these messages to reach the most at-risk demographics?
  - 3.1. Age?
    - 3.1.1.1. Parents of young children (pre-teen and younger)
    - 3.1.1.2. Teens and young adults (NOTE TO INTERVIEWER— Lit-Review identifies 15-30 years old as most at-risk)
    - 3.1.1.3. Seniors
  - 3.2. Gender? (NOTE TO INTERVIEWER—Lit-Review says males tend to outnumber females in drowning incidence.)

3.3. Race/ethnicity? (NOTE TO INTERVIEWER—some potential groups highlighted in the Lit-Review below.)

3.3.1.1. Hispanics/Latinos as well as Asian Americans (e.g. Vietnamese), or other immigrant groups who may not have highly proficient English language skills.

3.3.1.2. Blacks/African Americans, who, statistically, are more likely to have poorer swimming skills.

3.3.1.3. White demographic groups, who still represent the largest beach-going population by sheer number.