

## San Juan Islands Partnership Group

**Wednesday, February 12, 2014 | 11:30 a.m. – 1:55 p.m.\***  
**San Juan Island Yacht Club | 273 Front Street, Friday Harbor**

### DRAFT AGENDA

Time	Topic	Lead
11:30 a.m.	Welcome <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Opening Remarks</li> </ul>	David Moseley, WSF
11:45 a.m.	Meeting Overview <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Introductions</li> <li>Review agenda and meeting objectives</li> </ul>	Michael Hodgins, Facilitator (BERK)
11:55 a.m.	Service Disruptions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Operational approach</li> <li>Scenarios</li> </ul>	Dwight Hutchinson
12:45 a.m.	Break (10 min)	
12:55 p.m.	Communications Plan	Marta Coursey
1:30 p.m.	Review of Issues/decisions to date	Brian Churchwell, WSF
1:45 p.m.	Public Comments	Michael Hodgins
1:55 p.m.	Meeting Adjourned	

**Meeting Materials:**

- Operating plan summary of issues to date
- Discussion Guide: Service Disruptions
- Communications plan

\* Coincides with sailing schedule; **Departure** - 8:55am from Anacortes or interisland sailing (depart Lopez 9:55am, Shaw 10:15am, Orcas 10:35am) **Return** – 3:40pm to Anacortes or interisland sailing departing Friday Harbor at 2: 50pm

**For more information, please contact:**

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## SAN JUAN ISLANDS PARTNERSHIP GROUP

### Reservations and Service Disruptions

### Summary Discussion Guide -- DRAFT

“Service Disruptions” refer to any unplanned event (mechanical, weather-related, or otherwise) that causes a scheduled sailing to be delayed by more than 15 minutes or canceled. They **do not include tidal cancellations**, which are known well in advance. When service is disrupted, vessel staff makes the cancellation decision and communicates that to the Operations Center in Seattle. The Ops Center advises Customer Service who engage the various communication tools to advise the public. WSF recognizes that service disruptions make it difficult for customers to plan their travel. With a reservation system, they pose additional operating challenges.

As a starting point, it is useful to consider the expected frequency of service disruptions to put the challenges into an overall service context. The charts below present the historic trip reliability rates for the San Juan Domestic and International routes by quarter since July 2010. Overall, the San Juan domestic route completed 99.5% of trips over this period and the International Route 99.9%. This is significantly higher rate of schedule completion than the Port Townsend-Coupeville route (96% trip reliability) over this same period.

Service disruptions on the Anacortes – San Juan Islands routes are almost never weather related and almost always limited to one vessel. A service disruption on the Ana-SJI routes usually means reduced service and delays, but some service continues. Service is customized to best utilize the remaining vessels to meet the needs of the arriving traffic. It is important to note that a service disruption is defined as an interruption in service that results in **sailing cancellations**. A sailing delay alone does not constitute a service disruption from the point of view of reservations.

The following table summarizes the breakdown of service disruptions by cause. The majority of cancellations are caused by vessel maintenance issues (63%). Another 25% are the result of collateral cancellations, which are sailings cancelled to shift service around to adjust to a service disruption. Since maintenance cancellations are responsible for most collateral cancellations, these events actually account of about 88% of all cancelled sailings.

#### Service Disruptions (July 2009-December 2013)

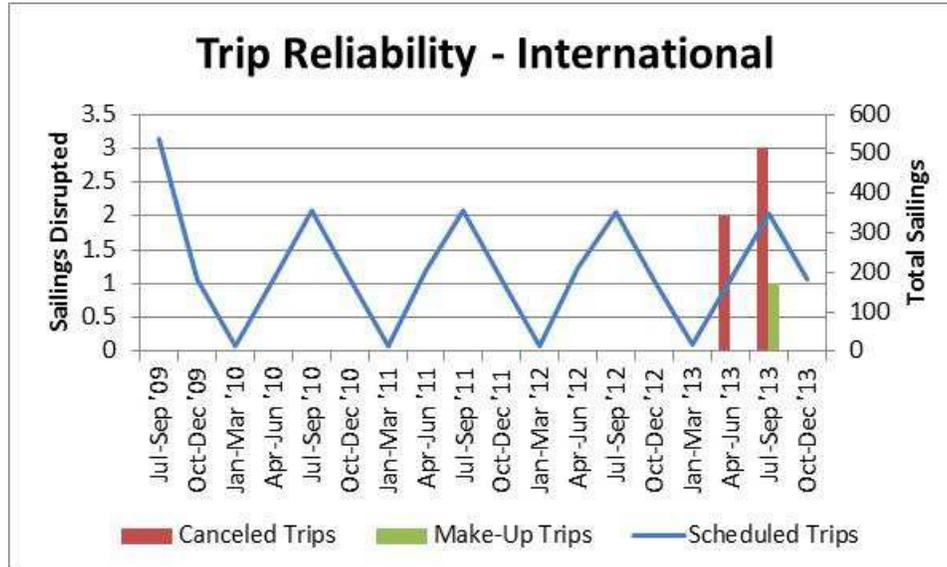
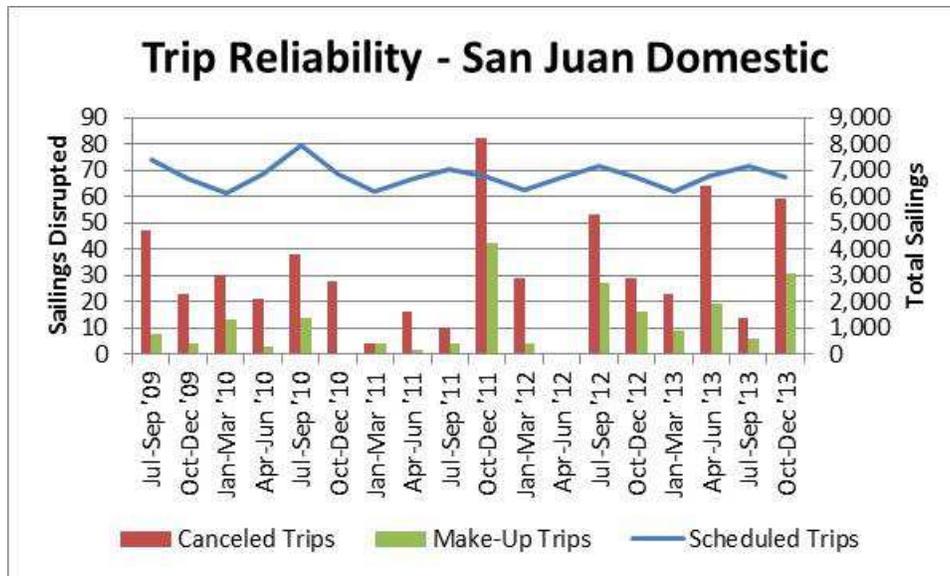
Reason for Cancellation	Frequency
Weather	3%
Vessel maintenance	63%
Emergency	2%
Crewing (less than minimum staffing)	7%
Miscellaneous and collateral cancellations	25%

The exhibits below present actual service disruption history on the San Juan domestic routes and the international routes. For each quarter, starting in July 2009, the charts show the number of canceled trips, the number of these that were made up during the same sailing day and the total sailings in the quarter. For example, the worst quarter for service disruptions was during October-December 2011 when, out of a total of 6,742 scheduled trips, there were 82 cancelled trips, of which 42 were made up for a net loss of capacity of 40 trips.

February 12, 2014

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In the event of a service disruption on a route with reservations, the operational response is guided by the following key principles:

- 1) **Communicate early and often.** Messaging about the delay/cancellation will be sent as soon as possible via all appropriate means of communication including WSF website, email alerts, text messaging, Highway Advisory Radio, and Terminal Advisory Radio. Information will be updated frequently to help manage traffic arriving at the terminal.
- 2) **Stop accepting new reservations.** WSF will typically stop allowing any new reservations from being made by customers for that route, for that operational day, or until service is determined to be back to normal conditions.
- 3) **Stop processing non-reservation holders at the terminal.** In order to honor reservations, WSF stop processing non-reservation holders arriving at the terminal during a service disruption.

- 4) **Priority to reservation holders.** Reservation holders will be given priority during and after a service disruption and will be loaded on a first come, first served basis until it is determined that service has returned to normal.
- 5) **Relax rules and no penalties.** During a service disruption, reservation rules will be relaxed and no-show penalties waived. Customers will not be held to the normal terms of agreement for their reservations for the balance of the day after a service disruption.

The following proposed policies represent an effort to minimize implications of disruptions on customers and set out the operational response to manage the traffic at the tollbooth in these circumstances.

## WSF Communications

- Customer Service messages information as soon as possible via all appropriate means of communication (email, text, WSF website, Highway & Terminal Advisory Radios and Highway & Terminal Variable Message Signs):
  - An immediate alert is sent advising customers of the disruption and noting the impacted sailings. This is expedited even if the plan forward is not yet known.
  - Website Terminal Conditions available space function is blocked. System automatically populates the most recent alert.
  - The prognosis forward (duration of disruption, sailings impacted, customer options) and what is known/unknown is communicated as soon as possible.
  - If the prognosis is unknown, that is communicated.
  - Updates are provided at least hourly until service returns to normal.
- Terminal Staff advises customers staged on the lot and queued outside the tollbooths. Updates are provided at least every 30 minutes until service returns to normal.
- Customer Service staff communicates with Terminal and Vessel Staff, re-assesses and updates plan as needed, at least hourly.
- Customer Service blocks new reservation bookings and relaxes the no show rules for the remainder of the operational day for both travel directions on the route(s) affected. Due to the interconnected nature of the service in the San Juan Islands, this means all domestic routes will be blocked in the event of a disruption.
  - For very limited disruptions terminal staff may advise CS not to block reservations for the entire day. When in doubt, staff should err on the side of caution and block more.
  - Due to customers returning on a round trip, no show rules are always relaxed for the remainder of the day (never for just part of the operating day).

## Terminal Operations

- Sellers stop processing non-reservation holders through the tollbooth.
- If the disruption is known to be limited and service will likely resume (or is continuing on a reduced schedule), at Terminal Staff discretion, customers with reservations may continue to process through the tollbooth and into the holding lanes, dependent on space available.

- Terminal staff will inform customers of situation, advises what is known about the prognosis forward, and provides options and guidance:
  - Customers with reservations who are affected by the disruption will not be penalized financially if they are unable or choose not to travel.
  - Customers with and w/o reservations who have not processed through the tollbooth may simply leave if they choose. No Show penalties will not be charged for unredeemed reservations for all sailings for the entire day.
  - Staged customers who have already redeemed reservations at the tollbooth may leave and receive a refund.
  - All staged customers in the vehicle holding area may remain and wait for service to resume (assuming that is still a possibility for the same service day).
- Terminal staff process queued reservation holders who choose to stage for travel when service resumes.
- Staff monitors local HARs/TARs (to the extent possible) and communicates to Customer Service if information is not current.
- Terminal staff communicates with Customer Service and vessel staff, re-assesses and updates plan as needed, at least hourly.

## When Service Resumes or Process for Managing Reduced Service

### **How service resumes if during the day in which the disruption occurred:**

- Customers staged and queued at the terminal may exceed vessel capacity. Customers are prioritized for travel as follows:
  - Vehicles already staged on the dock.
  - Reservation holders queued outside the tollbooth for any sailing today are processed first come, first served until all reservation holders impacted by the disruptions have been accommodated.
  - Reservation holders for sailings departing on schedule will be served after reservation holders staged and queued ahead of them (and may have to take a later departure).
  - Non-reservation holders are not processed through the tollbooth until service has resumed and all reservation holders for any sailing have been processed.
- Terminal, vessel and customer service staff re-assess and update plan as needed, at least hourly.
- Customer Service updates communications: Website, Alerts, HARs/TARs, Terminal Conditions.
- Terminal staff advises staged and queued customers of priority process.
- When reservation holder backlog has been processed, normal operations and procedures resume.
- At terminal staff discretion, ability to make new reservations may be re-activated. All reservations initially relaxed remain relaxed (no penalty for no-show). All reservations made after re-activation will be subject to normal no-show penalties.

- Staff will document the incident, including what went well, process breakdowns and suggestions, and provide a report to the Reservations Manager.

**In the days following the initial disruption, if a smaller vessel is utilized, reservations will be addressed as follows:**

- On sailings where there are more reservations held than there is space available on the smaller vessel, reservations will be honored on a first booked, first served basis
- For customers whose reservations cannot be honored due to the smaller vessel, WSF will contact them with alternative sailing options

## DRAFT COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

### Anacortes/San Juan Islands Vehicle Reservations System Launch

Last update: Feb. 7, 2014

#### OVERVIEW

Following the successful implementation of Save A Spot, WSF's new vehicle reservations system (VRS) on the Port Townsend/Coupeville and Anacortes/Sidney B.C. routes and commercial customers in the San Juan Islands, WSF is implementing vehicle reservations for all travelers on the Anacortes/San Juan Islands route.

The following communications plan addresses external<sup>1</sup> communication strategies in support of two key dates:

- Beginning Nov. 28, 2014, WSF will accept online reservations for customers traveling between Anacortes and the San Juan Islands for travel on Dec. 28 or after.
- Beginning Dec. 28, 2014, vehicle reservations will be redeemed on the Anacortes/San Juan Islands route.

This plan is a living document and will be reviewed and updated routinely. It covers the following areas: objective, key messages, audiences, communication tools, phases of communication, and implementation timeline.

#### OBJECTIVE

Promote vehicle reservations as a useful and important travel planning tool for the diverse customer base of Anacortes and the San Juan Islands, including residents, businesses, and tourists.

#### KEY MESSAGES

*Anacortes/San Juan Islands customer-specific messages:*

- Customers will be able to make vehicle reservations for all westbound sailings from Anacortes to:
  - San Juan Island (Friday Harbor).
  - Orcas Island.
  - Shaw Island.
  - Lopez Island.
- Customers will be able to make vehicle reservations for eastbound sailings<sup>2</sup> to Anacortes from:
  - Friday Harbor.
  - Orcas Island.
- The new reservations system offers many customer conveniences:

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<sup>1</sup> A parallel communications plan will be developed to address internal audiences

<sup>2</sup> Commercial reservations will be taken eastbound from all islands with the exception of Shaw Island. There are no reservations for the interisland ferry.

- Customers may reserve sailings 3-6 months in advance based on schedule availability. Additional vehicle space will be made available closer to sailing dates to meet the needs of short-term planners.
- Customers can change or cancel a reservation online.
- Customers are not charged a reservation fee or upfront deposit. (Customers are required to provide a credit card in order to secure a vehicle reservation. A no-show fee will be charged to the credit card if they do not travel on their reserved sailing or anytime from the same terminal on the same day.)
- Customers can change or cancel a reservation with no penalty up until 5:00 p.m. on the prior day.
- Customers can make one change after 5:00 p.m. of the prior day with no penalty.
- Customer account profiles may be saved in the system, providing the option for speedier transactions.
- Barcoded confirmations will make transactions at the terminal fast.

*General messages for vehicle reservations system-wide:*

- The system must work for WSF customers, being easy to use and offering an adequate degree of predictability, spontaneity, and flexibility.
- WSF aims to provide exceptional customer service with the implementation of a VRS.
- We have heard from approximately 2,600 users<sup>3</sup> of the existing VRS (Port Townsend/Coupeville and Anacortes/Sidney B.C. routes, and commercial customers in the San Juan Islands) that their experiences have been positive.
  - Nearly 85% of fall survey respondents found the Web site easy to use..
  - About 92% of survey respondents rated the check-in experience as good or excellent.
- A total of 245,648 vehicle reservations were made in 2013 with 82 percent of those made online.
- A VRS is one way to effectively manage demand and ease congestion at WSF terminals.
- Customers, community members, and the ferry system all benefit from a VRS in the following ways:
  - Reduce or eliminate traffic congestion on roads leading to terminals.
  - Provide predictable and convenient travel.
  - Increase business in ferry-served communities.
  - Reduce air pollution from idling vehicles.
  - Save money by mitigating the need for terminal expansion and/or added service.
  - Reduce traffic control costs and holding area maintenance costs.

**AUDIENCES**

- San Juan Islands customers/residents (both year-round and seasonal)
- Hospitality/tourism industry in the San Juan Islands and greater Puget Sound region
- Real estate in the San Juan Islands

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<sup>3</sup> July and November 2012 survey respondents

- Businesses in downtown Anacortes
- News media
- Greater Puget Sound region

## **COMMUNICATION TOOLS**

Below is a list of tools that WSF will use to communicate with our audiences.

Media: Media encompasses press releases, earned media and media availability. Both general and targeted press releases will be used during key milestones. WSF will also advertise a media availability to demonstrate the utility of bringing vehicle reservations to the San Juan Islands, targeting both the local papers and travel sections of larger, regional publications.

David's weekly report: Assistant Secretary David Moseley reports on WSF activities each week in a Friday e-mail that is distributed to more than 3,000 customers, elected officials and employees. David has regularly reported on the progress of the new VRS and will continue to do so as it relates to the project milestones.

E-mail alerts: Customers sign up for route e-mail alerts to stay apprised of WSF operations. Pertinent information relating to the new VRS will be distributed, using the e-mail alert system, to customers of the Port Townsend/Coupeville and Anacortes/Sidney B.C. routes. Note that this information is automatically tweeted to followers of the WSDOT twitter account.

Social media: WSF will communicate using available social media tools, including the [Go Somewhere](#) Facebook page, twitter feeds via the e-mail alert system, and [blog](#). (Please note that WSF is in the process of developing a social media plan and will employ new social media tools in support of reservations as they become available.)

Web site: There are several places on the WSF Web site to feature the new VRS, including the existing [project page](#), spotlight on the WSF homepage, and the existing [reservations Web page](#). The above-mentioned areas will be utilized to publicize the new VRS.

Marketing materials: Handouts, posters, signage, notices for visual paging screens, and collateral marketing materials will be developed and deployed at vessels, terminal, area businesses, visitor centers, rest areas, etc. to inform customers of the pending changes. Materials should include QR code(s) to enhance accessibility of online information. WSF will also ask that local and regional resources (e.g., hospitality industry, visitor bureaus, and real estate offices) link to these materials from their respective Web pages.

Paid advertising: The banner ads on the WSF Anacortes/San Juan Islands online schedule pages will be used to inform customers of the upcoming availability of the VRS. WSF will pursue a media buy for fall 2014 with the assistance of the community marketing group.

Community/hospitality information stations: Information stations will be identified in key locations in Anacortes, Friday Harbor, and Orcas Island where customers can go to make a reservation online and receive assistance. These stations will be staffed by private businesses (e.g., hospitality industry) and/or community representatives (e.g., chamber or visitor bureau

offices). WSF will provide training and/or training materials to area hospitalities and volunteers staffing information stations or kiosks regarding how to assist customers in making a reservation.

Direct mail: WSF may reach residents by doing a direct mailing to island post office boxes.

Survey Monkey: This online resource will be used to monitor the success of vehicle reservations. Customers of the VRS will be notified of its availability post-launch.

Electronic reader boards/HARs/TARs: Where available, electronic reader boards, highway advisory radio (HAR) and Terminal Advisory Radio (TAR) will be used to notify customers of pending changes. WSF will work with WSDOT headquarters to utilize reader boards managed by other regions.

Branding: In 2012, WSF developed a logo to brand the new VRS. This logo will continue to be used to identify VRS and will appear on all related communications (note that logo appears on header of this communications plan).

San Juan Islands Vehicle Reservations Community Partnership: In fall 2012, WSF convened the San Juan Islands Vehicle Reservations Community Partnership to discuss the possibility of expanding vehicle reservations to the San Juan Islands. The partnership is composed of various customer groups and representatives from each island. It was modeled after the successful partnership with the Port Townsend/Coupeville communities and has met on the following dates: Oct. 24, 2012, Dec. 6, 2012, Jan. 31, 2013, March 13, 2013, June 12, 2013, Sept. 11, 2013, and Nov. 14, 2013 (next meeting scheduled for Feb. 12, 2014). All agendas and materials are available on the VRS Web page at [www.wsdot.wa.gov/Ferries/Planning/VehicleReservations.htm](http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/Ferries/Planning/VehicleReservations.htm)

WSF community marketing group: WSF has worked with a community marketing group since 2011, to promote ferry travel to communities served by the system, through the development and implementation of campaign strategies. WSF can use this group, specifically the representatives from the Anacortes Chamber of Commerce and San Juan Islands Visitors Bureau, to garner support and communicate about the expansion of VRS to the San Juan Islands.

Ferry Advisory Committees: Representatives from Anacortes and San Juan Islands Ferry Advisory Committees (FACs) participate on the above-mentioned partnership. WSF also meets with the FAC executive council regularly to apprise them of WSF issues, including vehicle reservations.

Community meetings: WSF holds public meetings in ferry-served communities every fall and spring. The expansion of the VRS has been a topic of discussion at recent meetings in Anacortes and the San Juan Island communities. The next series of meetings will take place in May or June, 2014.

## **PHASES OF COMMUNICATION**

The plan has been divided into four, distinct outreach efforts (phases) as outlined below. Various communication tools, as described above, will be deployed during each phase of communication.

Phase 1: Initiation of Program Awareness, March-June 2014: The goal of this phase is to raise awareness among the San Juan Islands and Anacortes communities about the VRS, and to begin to garner support from existing users and resources in the community to assist with deployment.

Audiences: San Juan Islands customers, hospitality/tourism industry in San Juan Islands,

*Examples of outreach activities include: develop marketing materials, use feedback from San Juan Island commercial customers to refine the VRS program, provide regular updates on VRS in David Moseley's weekly e-mail report, meet with community marketing group on March 20 to evaluate VRS outreach strategies, present the topic at June community meetings in Anacortes and San Juan Islands.*

Phase 2: Community Outreach, July-October 2014: The goal of this phase is to proactively work with customers and community resources to prepare for the acceptance of vehicle reservations online beginning Nov. 28.

Audiences: All (as listed on page 2-3)

*Examples of outreach include: set up VRS information stations in key locations to create universal accounts, train volunteers who will staff stations, distribute marketing materials (posters, fliers) at key locations in San Juan Islands and Anacortes, raise awareness of VRS by way of Facebook and Twitter posts, banners at Anacortes terminal and Main Street in Anacortes, advertisement at Anacortes terminal receipts, posters on vessels and in terminal, postcards available at terminals.*

Phase 3: Implementation, November 2014-Jan 2015, and Peak Season Implementation, Feb 2015 and beyond: The goals of this phase are to advertise the availability of the VRS, to ensure the successful implementation of online reservations for customers of the San Juan Islands, and to begin reservations redemption on Dec. 28. In addition, WSF will respond quickly and efficiently to feedback received with respect to the new system, and continue to work with customers and the hospitality industry to effectively get the word out in advance of peak season (summer 2015).

Audiences: All (as listed on page 2-3)

*Examples of outreach include: press release and media demonstration, regular e-mail alerts to customers, information in the spotlight on the WSF homepage, update marketing materials and redistribution at key locations, work with hospitality industry to provide links to WSF Web site to*

*make reservations, continued dialogue on social media channels, topic at fall community meetings in San Juan Islands and Anacortes.*

Phase 4: Evaluation, Jan. 2015 and beyond: The goals of this phase are to evaluate the success of the new system, and make any necessary adjustments ahead of the heavy tourism seasons in spring and summer. A second evaluation will done following summer 2015 season.

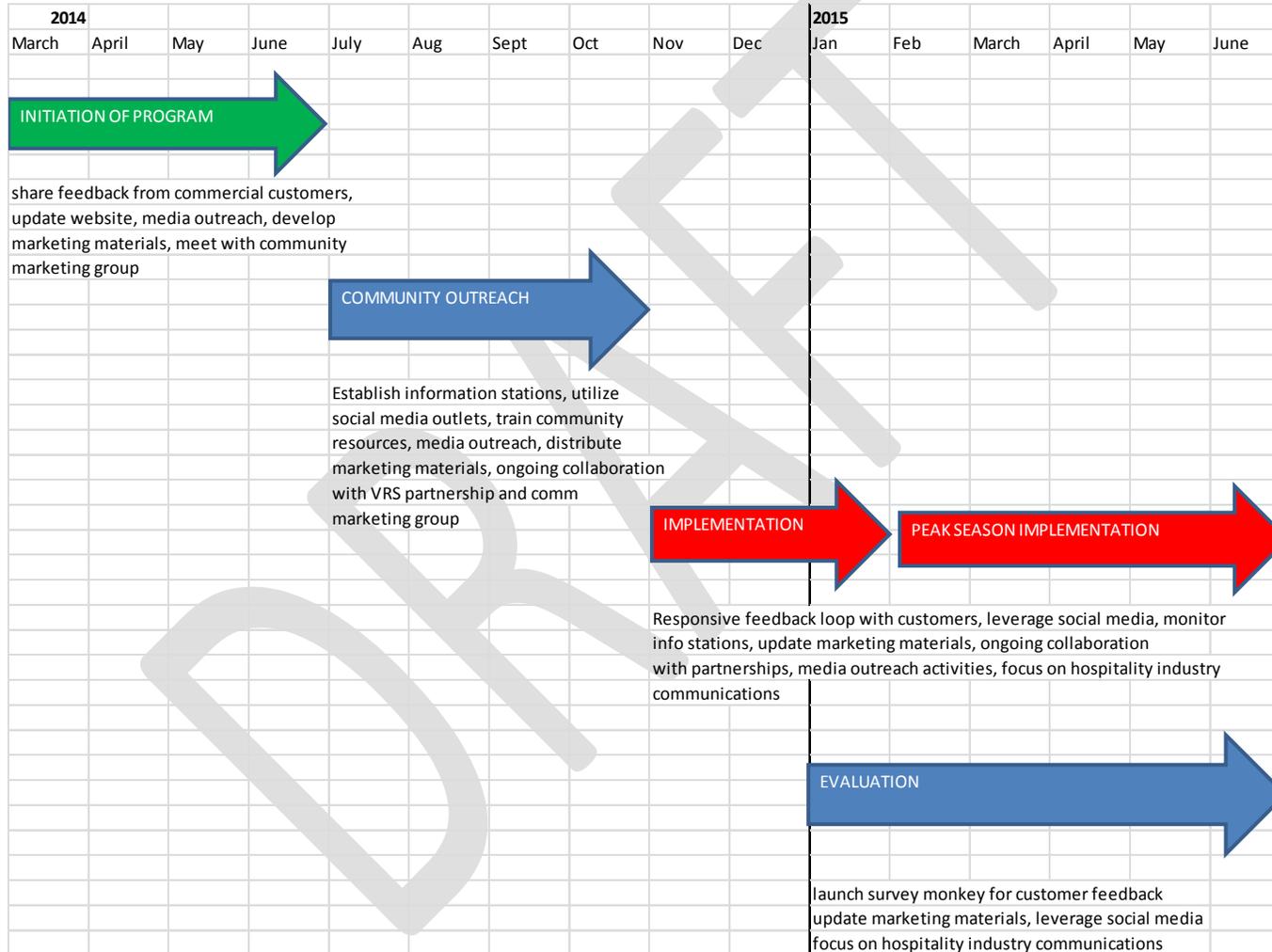
Audiences: San Juan Islands customers

*Examples of outreach include: set up online survey to get customer feedback and make program adjustments as necessary in response to input, continued dialogue with area media, regular check-in with hospitality industry to assess customer use of the system and remedy any issues.*

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## IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE

The following timeline presents an overview of the activities that will occur within each phase of this communications plan.



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