



Campaign Media Outreach

Effective media outreach is essential to raising the visibility of the campaign in-state and in the conservation community. To get us started we recommend the following three-step approach. We have also provided some practical suggestions and hints to help guide your outreach with the media. Keep in the mind that, your goal when communicating with the media, is to consistently promote the campaign's key messages.

DEVELOP A MEDIA LIST

First, contact your state's public affairs office to see if they have a media list to share. If this is not available to you, take the following steps to develop an effective media list:

- 1) Identify relevant media outlets and reporters who cover conservation, metro/city news and community events. You can use the Yellow Pages at www.yellowpages.com to locate contact information for local news media outlets. State newspaper and journalism organizations are also good outlets from which to obtain free or low-cost media directories.

Additional resources that can help you identify media outlets include the following. These resources are, unfortunately, not free. However, they can sometimes be accessed through local libraries and university offices.

- **Bacon's Media Lists:** A database of 60,000 media outlets and nearly 400,000 editorial contacts at magazines, newspapers, broadcasters, and wire services. The lists are based on a daily-updated computer file and are available in the form of custom-selected lists on labels, diskette or e-mail. www.bacons.com

- **All-in-One Directory:** A compact directory of 23,000 listings for daily and weekly papers; radio and television, business and trade magazines; etc. www.gebbieinc.com/aio.htm

- **Burrelle's Media Directories:** Directories include more than 30,000 United State fish and wildlife agencies contacts arranged by daily and non-daily newspapers; news services and feature syndicates; magazines and newsletters; radio and television stations; and local cable systems. www.burrelles.com

- **CorporateNews.com:** A Web-based directory of 30,000 on-line and off-line media outlets from daily papers to e-zines. Listings are regularly updated and include e-mail addresses. www.corporatenews.com

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- 2) Call each news organization – or visit its Web site – to confirm or add names of journalists who cover conservation and environmental issues.
- 3) Organize contact information for each reporter in an Excel database, including the reporter’s name, title, address, phone number, e-mail address, fax number and deadlines. This will allow you to reach appropriate contacts in a timely manner.
- 4) Update your list on a regular basis to ensure the information for each contact is correct. As you develop your list, note how each journalist prefers to be contacted (i.e., e-mail, telephone or fax).

Once you have developed a list of contacts, follow the stories they write closely. Observe their point of view and biases. This will make it easier when it comes time to promote your story to them, as you will be familiar with their style and their body of work. Be sure to pay close attention to journalists who consistently write on conservation issues.

Don’t Forget the Wires!

Be sure that your media list includes contacts for the state and local wire services. Wire services provide media content to a large number of print, broadcast and online outlets. By placing one story with a wire service, you can reach people across the state or even the country. The following will help you identify contacts at the major wire services:

- The Associated Press - visit www.ap.org/pages/aptoday/aptoday_contact.html or call 212-621-1500.
- Reuters - visit www.reuters.com or call 646-223-4000.

WRITE A PRESS RELEASE

After accessing or developing a list of local media contacts, you are ready to reach out to the media. One of the most effective methods for contacting media is to send a press release that tells journalists what you would like them to say about your campaign event or activity.

You can start with the template press releases in both the Coalition and Messaging Toolkits. You may also wish to draft additional releases about specific campaign events and activities. Press releases should provide the basic who, what, when and where information about campaign events. Make sure the release:

- Has a “hook”;
- Gets to the point;
- Uses succinct, “quotable” quotes;
- Looks clean and is easy to read;
- Has been proofread; and
- Is no more than two pages long.

Media Advisories:

Media advisories are short press releases issued several days prior to an event. The goal of a media advisory is to let journalists know about an event that they should plan to cover. Media advisories

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should not exceed one page in length. As a general rule, the shorter the advisory the better.

Advisories should include the following:

- Date, time and location of event;
- Names of all people and groups participating in the event;
- One sentence on why a journalist would want to cover the event;
- Information on any visual elements being displayed at the event; and
- Contact information for questions concerning the event.

Keep in mind that an advisory is meant to entice journalists to attend an event. As a result, it should only serve as a preview of the event. It does not need to include event participant quotes or detailed information on what will be discussed at the event. For example, if you are announcing the results of new state poll, the advisory should not include the poll results. It should only say that a poll will be released at this date and time. The full poll results should be included in the press release issued the day of the event.

Examples of Media Advisory Headlines:

- *Teaming with Wildlife Campaign Leaders Take Wildlife Conservation Message to State Capital*
- *Teaming with Wildlife Campaign to Release Poll About Wildlife Conservation in North Carolina*
- *Senator Jim Smith Meets with State fish and wildlife Agencies from the Teaming with Wildlife Campaign To Discuss Funding for Conservation*
- *600 Wildlife Organizations of the Teaming with Wildlife Campaign To Visit Local Conservation Projects*

INFORM THE MEDIA

Once completed, the press releases and media advisories should be e-mailed or faxed to all contacts on your media list. Check with specific journalists to ask what distribution method they prefer.

Tips for E-mailing Press Releases:

- Be sure to cut and paste the text of the release into the body of the e-mail. Many journalists will not open attachments due to the threat of computer viruses.
- Send the release with a creative subject headline. Journalists receive many e-mails a day, so try to make yours stand out from the crowd.
- Clearly provide contact information including your phone number and e-mail in the body of the e-mail.

After distributing the press release, be sure to follow up with media contacts to:

- Ensure that the press release was received;
- Find out if the reporters want additional information about the event;
- Solicit feedback on the newsworthiness of the event and issue; and
- Encourage reporters to cover your event or activity.

One of the best ways to follow-up with a reporter is over the phone. Unless a reporter has specifically asked not to be called, you should consider the phone as your primary method for following up with reporters. During a follow-up telephone call to a reporter, be brief and direct.

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Immediately state who you are, why you are calling, and the reason why the person should listen to you. Keep the following points in mind when following up with a journalist:

- To keep the reporters attention, provide new information about your event or story that is not contained in your press release or media advisory.
- Be able to explain your story in three sentences or less. It doesn't hurt to practice your "pitch" with a friend prior to making the call.
- Offer to assist the journalists in finding state fish and wildlife agencies and/or faculty to interview about your story.

Keep in mind that a key ingredient to obtaining publicity in any medium, but especially for radio and television, is to be accessible, flexible, and accommodating. It is important to remember that you are seeking to serve the journalist's needs, not the other way around.

The Assignment Desk

Most major print and broadcast media outlets will have an assignment desk staffed by one or more people. This desk is command central for the outlet and its staff often determines which stories are covered and who will be covering them. If you are not sure exactly who to call to follow-up with on a story, call the assignment desk staff and ask. The assignment desk should also always be faxed or e-mailed media advisories about upcoming events.

MEDIA TIPS

- 1. Know how to reach journalists.** Keep your press lists updated with current phone, fax and e-mail information.
- 2. Always clearly identify yourself and why you are calling.** Journalists talk to many people a day.
- 3. Be direct.** Don't beat around the bush with reporters. If you want them to write a story about campaign activities on your state and in the community, directly ask them to do so.
- 4. Be brief.** News stories require concise, succinct messages that can easily be converted into "soundbites" and short quotes.
- 5. Be honest.** If you do not know an answer, say so and offer to find out. Never answer a question you do not fully understand.
- 6. Respect deadlines.** Members of the media work on tight deadlines. Try to avoid calling in the late afternoon or immediately before a news broadcast and always respond quickly and accurately to journalists' requests.
- 7. Be flexible and accommodating.** By working with journalists' busy schedules, you can help improve or increase coverage of the campaign.
- 8. Don't be discouraged.** Journalists are asked to cover a wide-range of stories on strict timelines everyday. Persistence often pays off.

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9. **Say thanks.** Send thank you notes, and when promoting specific stories to the press, also thank journalists for their time, even if they chose not to cover your event or story idea.

STRATEGIES FOR GAINING COVERAGE OF STATE EVENTS

Journalists are asked to cover many events a day. The key to getting them to select your event is to put together an event that is accessible, newsworthy and offers a photo opportunity for photographers.

Below are several hints to help you draw media coverage to an event:

- Big names are often big draws. Ask prominent elected officials or staff to participate in your event;
- Hold the event in a unique location that offers photo opportunities. For example, instead of holding an event in a state conference room, hold the event in a high traffic area. Use posters and visuals to state your key messages.
- Respect media deadlines and try to hold events between 10 a.m. and 3 p.m.
- Journalists will likely not be able to spend more than thirty minutes at an event. Make your event short, or ask the journalists to come during a specific block of time.

To promote your event, issue a media advisory 3-4 days prior to the event. After the advisory is issued call the journalists on your media list to encourage them to attend. The day before the event, send the media advisory again or call journalists to remind them to attend. Be aware that many journalists will be unable to commit to attending an event until the day before or even the day of the event.

A press release that highlights the main features of the event should be given out to journalists during the event. It should also be sent via e-mail or fax to key journalists who were unable to attend the event in person.

What's a daybook and why does my event need to be listed on it?

A daybook is a listing of all events taking place during a given day. Assignment editors frequently check daybooks to determine what events they are going to send reporters to cover. Daybooks are often managed locally by the Associated Press (AP) bureau. You should call your local AP to find out how to submit events for the daybook.

To locate the number of your local AP bureau visit www.ap.org/pages/contact/contact.html.

Your state public relations office may also be able to give you helpful advice on how to get an event listed on community daybooks.

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SUGGESTED STORY CONCEPTS TO PROMOTE TO THE MEDIA

Not all press stories stem from events. In fact, many times it is possible to obtain excellent media coverage by issuing a press release, arranging an interview, or suggesting to a reporter that they pursue a specific type of story. Below are some story concepts the media should find newsworthy.

The Social Impact of Wildlife Conservation—Suggest to a local newspaper that it develop a story on the positive influence that wildlife has had on your state’s community. This could include success stories of current State Wildlife Grants or the State Wildlife Action Plans. It could also incorporate statistics regarding outdoor recreation. To promote this story concept we recommend providing a reporter with one or all of the following:

- A fact sheet or press release containing local information on how your state’s conservation actions have positively impacted the community;
- Short biographies on current state fish and wildlife agencies and alumni who lead the efforts;
- Case studies of conservation projects that have benefited the community; and
- Names and contact information for key state fish and wildlife agency personnel, state officials and community officials willing to be interviewed for the story.

Good for the Next Generation—This story would focus on how wildlife conservation are preparing people and communities to be future leaders and the impact they can have on wildlife conservation and related policies. Reporters could incorporate profiles of state fish and wildlife agencies leaders, interviews with conservation experts and elected officials willing to share their thoughts on the next generation of wildlife and the people that will ultimately care for them. The following tips may help you encourage a reporter to write this type of story:

- Prepare by knowing the key messages—one of them is about “future generations”;
- Provide the reporter with bios and other relevant background information on state fish and wildlife agencies leaders;
- Offer interviews with in-state experts, such scientists, biologists and uniformed state fish and wildlife agency staff and administration officials; and
- Provide examples of state fish and wildlife agencies leaders taking action to improve wildlife and their habitat for future generations.

State Wildlife Action Plans Influencing Positive Change in a Negative World: The nation’s wildlife are facing greater difficulties all the time. This story would focus on the changing habitats of species and how they affect endangered species listings. To promote this type of story to a reporter:

- Draft a press release or fact sheet with relevant up-to-date statistics on the status of today’s wildlife (keep the facts as local as possible);
- Invite a journalist to spend the day with a state wildlife agency biologist who is exploring local habitat for change;
- Promote an interview with state fish and wildlife directors; and
- Ask people to speak to the reporter about the threats they perceive are happening for wildlife.

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