



## Tip Sheet:

# Finding Volunteers to Build Your Coalition

Coordinating volunteers takes an investment of time upfront, but the payoffs can be enormous. Many states have already discovered the power of volunteers in implementing conservation projects, but they can also be a critical tool for building your Teaming with Wildlife coalition and spreading the word about your wildlife action plan. The real challenge is to find a few dedicated individuals and explore what kinds of activities will hold their interest for years to come.

## 10 Ways Volunteers Can Help Build Your Coalition

### Fun and easy ways to get club members and individual supporters involved:

- Provide volunteers with stacks of brochures or endorsement forms to take to organizations and businesses in their communities. Offer an incentive (e.g. t-shirt, framed wildlife print, a weekend of bird banding,) for the volunteer who collects the most endorsements. You could do the same thing with a sign-on letter, postcards and/or petition to your Congressional delegation.
- Arrange a phone banking session and provide a list of local organizations and businesses that volunteers can call and urge to join the coalition. This could be combined with envelope stuffing, data entry, etc... Make this a regular event and draw in more volunteers by adding a hike beforehand or by screening a wildlife related movie (Winged Migration, Planet Earth, etc.).
- Enlist volunteers and their kids in fun activities all year long:
  - Several years ago, Iowa DNR sent out 12"x12" squares of cotton fabric and asked people –and their children- to contribute to a "quilt for wildlife" by putting a conservation message of some sort on the fabric square. The quilts were sent to Iowa's entire Congressional delegation.
  - Nebraska Game and Parks Commission recently teamed up with the Nebraska Wildlife Federation to host a poster contest for 4-6<sup>th</sup> graders on their Wildlife Action Plan.

### Cultivating dedicated individuals into champions for your coalition:

- When you find an engaged volunteer who is well-connected in a certain user group (tourism, wild bird specialty stores, bass fishing, land conservation, etc) ask them to be your ambassador to that community. Ask if you can help by providing regular updates, brochures, draft letter text, a phone script, contact list, etc... You could even invite such a dedicated volunteer to join your coalition's core group or steering committee.
- Get volunteers to write letters to the editor, describing the great need for funding and calling on other groups to join. They can also help by writing articles on Teaming with Wildlife and the state wildlife action plans for the newsletters of local organizations they belong to.
- If you have a birding or wildlife viewing trail, recruit volunteers to travel sections of the trail, visiting each business or attraction along it, asking them to join. Encourage them to take pictures of wildlife they see along the way and write up a trip report for your newsletter.
- Create a PowerPoint and train volunteers to be part of a speaker's bureau, available to travel to club meetings for presentations on Teaming with Wildlife and your state's wildlife action plan.

Teaming with Wildlife

A coalition of more than 5,000 groups working together to prevent wildlife from becoming endangered.

c/o Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies

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## Enlist volunteers to help you make the most of wildlife-related events:

- Involve volunteers in planning a wildlife summit, media field trip or other event. If you have volunteers working on a state wildlife grants project already, turn that project into a media event and invite your congressional delegation.
- Recruit volunteers to staff Teaming with Wildlife booths at your state fairs, outdoor expos, sport shows or wildlife festivals. Share information about your state wildlife action plan and collect endorsements at your booth. Also ask your volunteers visit each of the other booths getting exhibitors to join the coalition.

## 10 Places to Find and Recruit Volunteers

- **USA Freedom Corps:** [http://www.usafreedomcorps.gov/for\\_orgs/overview/](http://www.usafreedomcorps.gov/for_orgs/overview/)  
This latest incarnation of volunteer.gov is the closest thing to a one-stop clearinghouse for volunteer information. It includes special sections with information for organizations and state governments, a place to post your volunteer opportunities and links to directories of volunteers.
- **Take Pride in America:** <http://www.takepride.gov/>  
Department of Interior's volunteer gateway. There's an easy tool to list your own events, but don't stop there! Become a "partner," and you'll have an opportunity to include a link to your volunteer opportunities page above your state's other listings.
- **The Wildlife Society Chapters and Student Chapters:** <http://www.wildlife.org/chapters/>  
As current and future wildlife professionals, members of The Wildlife Society have a deeply vested interest in securing wildlife funding. The Wildlife Society chapter newsletters and meetings have been particularly valuable avenues for engagement in states that restrict agency employees from getting involved in advocacy efforts in their official capacity.
- **National Wildlife Federation Habitat Stewards:** <http://www.nwf.org/volunteer/>  
National Wildlife Federation's Habitat Stewards program recruits "Hosts" to help lead volunteer outreach efforts in their community. In turn, these "Hosts" recruit and train teams of individual "Stewards." Contact your state's NWF Affiliate to learn more about this effort in your state.
- **Master Naturalist-type programs:** [http://www.nralliance.org/pages/member\\_programs/](http://www.nralliance.org/pages/member_programs/)  
As self-selected groups of dedicated volunteer conservationists who receive expert training, Master Naturalist-type programs can be an essential resource, not just for plan implementation, but also for building your coalition and spreading the word about your wildlife action plan.
- **Service and Conservation Corps:** <http://www.nascc.org/>  
A descendent of the 1930's era Civilian Conservation Corps, today's corps network includes 113 youth service organizations from 41 states. While most are more suited to action plan implementation work, they vary from state to state and some can help build your coalition.
- **Friends Groups (for wildlife refuges, national parks, national forests, etc.)**  
As dedicated individuals who band together to support treasured natural areas, Friends Groups of all kinds are a rich resource for your coalition. These groups have particularly strong ties to local communities can be your ambassadors to local businesses and like-minded groups. They may also be eager to feature Teaming with Wildlife at their frequent events.
  - <http://www.refugenet.org/new-friends-connect/index-frgp.html>
  - [http://home.nps.gov/applications/partnerships/friends\\_groups\\_directory.cfm](http://home.nps.gov/applications/partnerships/friends_groups_directory.cfm)
  - [http://www.appl.org/Members\\_New/members\\_state.htm](http://www.appl.org/Members_New/members_state.htm)
  - <http://www.volunteer.gov/gov/friendsGroups.cfm>

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- **Student Conservation Association:** [http://www.thesca.org/environmental\\_protection/](http://www.thesca.org/environmental_protection/)  
Best known for their work on trails, the Student Conservation Association recruits thousands of young people for a wide range of conservation internships and volunteer opportunities each year. For similar opportunities, consider Boy Scout Troops, Girl Scout Troops, Venture Crews, 4-H Clubs and campus environmental groups in your area.
- **Audubon Sanctuaries and Other Nature Centers**  
Each year, millions of Americans pass through nature centers operated by Audubon Chapters and other organizations. Shouldn't your wildlife action plan and Teaming with Wildlife be part of that experience? Fortunately, many of these centers have dedicated volunteers willing to help out by distributing brochures at these centers and beyond. Here are a few listings:
  - <http://www.audubon.org/states/flashMap.php>
  - <http://www.natctr.org/links.html>
  - <http://www.nairegions.org/>
- **Don't Let Vacation Days Expire!**  
Each December, try sending around an email to action plan stakeholders, grant recipients, consultants, academic partners, etc. Ask if they would like to spend a day or two of their vacation "giving back" to wildlife by working on your coalition building efforts.

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