



Hosting a Successful Field Trip for Elected Officials & Media

Field trips are one of the most effective ways that you can show your elected officials, their staff, and media what is being done on the ground with State Wildlife Grants funding and why you need new and greater funding for wildlife conservation. Members of Congress are bombarded with requests for help and federal funding so being able to tie a request back to a personal trip they've taken makes a big difference. Showcasing wildlife conservation projects and meeting your partners gives your elected officials a real, firsthand understanding of what conservation is all about and is a great story for a local reporter.

Field trips also give you the opportunity to develop a real relationship with reporters, your Congressional delegation and their staff. They get to know you in a relaxed and fun setting - and you might get a whole day of their time (not just the 15-30 minutes you get on visits to DC.) When you call to ask for something later it's all much easier - and they know they can call you when they need more information on wildlife issues. As you well know, there is no substitute for personal relationships.

Public officials are more likely to attend an event where they can get news coverage and reporters are likely to find an event with public officials to be more newsworthy, so when possible, try to get both Members of Congress and media out at the same time.

What to do:

1. Schedule a trip with the Member of Congress. Call their DC office and ask to speak to the scheduler to set up some time with the Member of Congress (to be connected to any Congressional Office, call the Capitol Switchboard at (202) 224-3121). Find out when during they plan on being back in the district or state. Consult the [House of Representatives calendar](#) and [Senate calendar](#) for a general sense of when Congress will be in recess. Ask for a few hours or a day that is free and tell the scheduler what you are hoping to do. Make sure to mention that you are also inviting media. If you get nowhere, try calling the district or state office and getting their interest. Sometimes the local offices handle scheduling for district or state events.
2. Call the DC office and invite staffers out on a trip. It's just as good to get staff out as it is to get the Members of Congress themselves. Staff will likely have more time, and they are the ones you will keep working with in the future. Tell them you are interested in showing them projects in the field. They are always glad to get back in the state/district and would love a chance to get out in field.
3. If they are interested, you will need to put the scheduling request in writing. Take a look at the template [Field Trip Meeting Request](#) for ideas of what to include. Put together an itinerary and get it back to any interested staff and Members. Make the itinerary FUN, interesting and informative. Consider a trip you might already take state officials/dignitaries on and build from that. Be sure to include current or potential projects, and provide them with logistical details like what to wear, etc. Consider taking them out on the water or to some special habitat or wildlife viewing opportunity that they might not be as able to do on their own. If they are interested, give them the opportunity to get involved - how many congressional staffers have

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

444 North Capitol Street, Suite 725, Washington, D.C. 20001

Phone: 202/624-7890 Fax: 202/624-7891 Email: teaming@fishwildlife.org
www.teaming.com



ever had the opportunity to release young peregrine falcons or participate in a controlled burn?

4. Once you have a date set with your Congressional delegation, put together a media advisory to send to state reporters, inviting them to attend the event. Your agency's I&E Department can assist you in distributing this to the environment and outdoor writers in your state. A good place to start is this [Template Media Advisory](#).
5. Let attendees know who else will be on the trip. An agency director and other high level staff should be on it, and partner organizations should be involved as much as possible. It helps Hill staff and members of the media justify coming and also sends a strong message about how important this is to the agency. Make sure your Wildlife Diversity Program is involved to provide the expertise on the new funding needs.
6. On the day of the event, have everyone meet at a central, easy to access location and then provide transportation to the project site in your agency's van/truck/boat etc. Include lunch, water, snacks, and meals as necessary. Make the trip as easy as possible.
7. Have some educational material to give out: information on programs and projects, but also general information on the resources, such as your state's wildlife viewing guide. Work with your I&E Department to put together a press kit for reporters which should include the same educational materials and also a press release about the day. As a courtesy, show the press release to the Congressional staff attending the trip or to the Member's press secretary in advance and be sure to get any quotes by your Congressman approved well ahead of time.
8. Do not bombard participants with every detail of information. Give them time to have fun outdoors and to ask questions. This should be their opportunity to see what you are doing and find out what they want to know.
9. When taking Members of Congress, staff, and media to see wildlife, assume they might not know anything. Remember that they are policy people and writers, not biologists! Make sure they feel comfortable asking questions. Some of them are already fluent in the outdoors and natural resources but don't assume that they are. Be ready to identify common species and show people how to use binoculars.
10. Do not assume they know anything about your agency or the details of programs and projects. Avoid jargon and acronyms at all costs! Do not talk about PR and DJ and SWG! Remember that the point of a field trip is to give them an overview of the resources, not to discuss the finer details of policy and funding.
11. Show them both a success story (peregrine falcon restoration, a recovering native prairie) and also a problem area (declining shorebirds or threatened wetland). This helps highlight what having funding, expertise and commitment can do, and why you so desperately need additional funding to make it all happen.
12. After the trip, be sure to follow up with a thank you note to the Member of Congress or staff who attended. A good place to start is the [Template Field Trip Thank You](#), but you may also want to include photos from the day and any media coverage of the event.

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

444 North Capitol Street, Suite 725, Washington, D.C. 20001

Phone: 202/624-7890 Fax: 202/624-7891 Email: teaming@fishwildlife.org
www.teaming.com