Communications Skills for
Natural Resource Managers

Sponsored by the Society of American Foresters
Communications Committee and
Education and Communication Working Group (F3)
Principles of Public Relations
The Principles of Public Relations

Communications Goals and Objectives

• Corporate Communications have a purpose
• Which has to be defined: why do we communicate
• The answers will provide us with general goals and specific objectives
• We have to know what we want to achieve in order to achieve it!
Identifying Audiences

• Audiences you want to reach should match your goals and objectives
• You don’t want to talk to anybody
• Audiences have to be targeted to match the specific objectives
• In short: to meet your communications objectives, you have to talk to specific people
Developing Key Messages

• Objectives have been set, audiences have been targeted
• You know to whom you want to talk to achieve your objectives
• Now, what are you going to tell them?
• **Messages** will have to be tailored and delivered to key audiences
In short

- In order to do what you want to do,
- You have to talk to the right persons,
- And tell them what you think they need to hear
- This means corporate communications, as any business move, have to be planned.
Determining Tactics

• The fun part… but don’t do this first!
• Important to be strategic, most of us only have finite resources such as time and budget.
• Important to do after developing goals, objectives, and key messages!
• Determine what is the most appropriate method of getting your message to your audience.
Examples of Tactics

- News releases
- Press packets
- Magazine articles
- Museum/zoo displays
- Tours
- Project Days
- Volunteer Networks
- Brochures
Evaluating Success

• What will you use to measure your outcome?
• Have you changed behavior?
• Have you increased public understanding?
• Have you improved communication with a particular audience?
Typical Measures

• Number of media contacts
• Number of semi-accurate news articles
• Number of volunteers working on a project
• Number of people/organizations implementing new information
• Number of collaborators on a project
• Attendance at public meetings
Contingency Plans

• Revisit and re-evaluate plans.
• Nothing is constant but change.
• Be flexible
• Murphy’s law – Be prepared for the unexpected -- be prepared for the worst case scenario
Investing in Media Relations

Dan Kincaid
USDA Forest Service
Wayne National Forest
Athens, Ohio
An Expert

- Is more than 50 miles from home.
- Uses audio-visuals.
- Has no responsibility for implementing the advice he or she gives.
Investing in Media Relations

Public Relations, Public Affairs, & Public Information Activities Can Include:

- Media Relations
- Advertising
- Marketing
- Internal Communications
- Congressional Operations
- Educational Programs
- Grassroots Meetings
- Community Outreach

All are important. For this discussion, we’ll deal with media relations
Investing in Media Relations

- Natural Resource Managers and communicators must master an important task: Influencing Public Opinion.
- It’s the human dimension of managing forests and natural resources.
- It’s as important as any of the scientific dimensions (at times, more important).
- The only effective way to reach lots of people is through the mass media.
Investing in Media Relations

Some surveys have shown that nearly 80% of what people know (or think they know) about natural resources, they learned from the media.
“Whatever literacy in science and technology the general public has reached is not from formal education. Rather it is from the mass media.”

Michael Maher, Ph.D.
Journalism/Communication Professor
University of Southwestern Louisiana
Investing in Media Relations

**Agenda Setting Theory**

- The media tell the public what to think about.
- Issues that get the most coverage in the news media become issues that the public identifies in surveys as being most important.
As one issue gains coverage in the media — and therefore in perceived importance by the public — other issues diminish.
Investing in Media Relations

Repetition propels an issue higher on the media’s agenda.

Coverage Begets Coverage
Coverage Begets Coverage
Coverage Begets Coverage
Coverage Begets Coverage
In writing stories, reporters must allow some facts into the story frame and ignore others. There is limited space available.
Investing in Media Relations

Some points made by Jim Fazio in Public Relations and Communications for Natural Resource Managers:
1) You cannot escape public relations. It is happening and will happen to your organization and profession. The only questions, though, are:

- Is it good or bad PR?
- Are you having any influence over it?
Investing in Media Relations

2) Offense is more effective than defense.

3) Truth and honesty are essential. (No whitewashes, please.)
4) You can be completely correct from a scientific standpoint, but if enough people disagree with you or don’t like what you’re doing, eventually they will have their way.
Investing in Media Relations

Failure to engage the media effectively is one of the primary reasons why we face such a distrustful public.
Investing in Media Relations

We’ve done a good job with our science — we just haven’t communicated it effectively.
Investing in Media Relations

In most ways, it’s not the journalists’ fault — it’s ours.
Investing in Media Relations

Up until now . . .

■ We have been primarily reactionary.
■ We have not defined the debate.
■ We have largely been relegated to the sidelines in discussing issues.
Investing in Media Relations

This is an Art – Not a Science

You can learn to become effective in media relations.
Investing in Media Relations

6 Principles of Effective Media Relations

- Be Accessible
- Be Prompt
- Be Honest
- Be Knowledgeable
- Be Helpful
- Be Reliable

- McLoughlin Multi-Media Publishing Ltd. 1996
Investing in Media Relations

➢ Get to know the media representatives.

➢ Try to understand their business and their constraints.

➢ Empathize with them.

➢ They’re generally overworked, under paid and under appreciated.
Investing in Media Relations

- They work odd hours – and long hours.
- They’re “on-call” all of the time.
- They have deadlines _every_ day; not just periodic due dates.
- Try to think like they do in terms of story angles.
- Make their jobs easier – get them info – become their source.
Investing in Media Relations

- Always return reporters calls.
- Always be honest.
- Don’t speak off the record.
- Be proactive, take initiative, advance ideas.
Investing in Media Relations

Understand and Respect the Value of Freedom of Speech and a Free Press
Investing in Media Relations

Network TV News Has Lost Half Its Audience

- In 1975, about 48% households watched evening news
- In 1997, only 26% watched
Investing in Media Relations

Where do they get their news?

- Local newspapers
- Local TV stations

Local TV anchors were their “most trusted” sources of information.
The average person pays attention to “news” 30 minutes to 2 hours per day. 

Roper Survey — 1997
Investing in Media Relations

70% read local papers several times a week.

25% listen to talk radio at least once a week.
Investing in Media Relations

Media Relations Tips

• Get to know reporters/editors one-on-one.
• What is a “story”? What is news?
• Always cooperate. **Tell the truth.**
• Don’t avoid sensitive issues.
• Alert media to breaking stories and new developments.
• Nurture relationships.
Investing in Media Relations

Media Relations Tips

• Update names, titles, addresses, phone, e-mail, and fax numbers.
• Give adequate lead time.
• Include catchy title and lead, 5 W’s, and contact person.
• Give one person as contact for organization.
• Target media proactively.
Investing in Media Relations

Media Relations Tips

• It’s an on-going, continuous, never-ending job.

• Reporters are probably busier than you are.

• “Space” is limited.

• Start immediately.
Investing in Media Relations

If It’s Not Told, It’s Not Sold!
If It’s Not Told, It’s Not Sold!
If It’s Not Told, It’s Not Sold!
If It’s Not Told, It’s Not Sold!

If It’s Not Told, It’s Not Sold!
Investing in Media Relations

- Newspapers
- Magazines
- Television
- Radio
- Internet / Websites
Investing in Media Relations

Newspapers (Pro’s)

- Can reach large numbers of people with minimum effort & cost.
- If in print, it must be true.
- Words have authority.
- You can read it when you’re ready.
- Can make copies & distribute; re-read often.
- Proofreading ahead of time can catch most errors.
- 70% of people over age 18 read newspapers.
Investing in Media Relations

Newspapers (Con’s)

• Deadlines are critical.
• If an error slips through, it is there forever.
• Can retract or correct, but damage may be done.
• Misinformation in print, is taken for truth, by many.
• Time lapse (vs. TV, Radio) – Things may change in a day.
Investing in Media Relations

Newspapers (Con’s) Continued

- Print only (some photos) - No motion or spoken words.
- Short life span until it becomes bird cage liner.
- Though 70% read papers, may not read your story.
Investing in Media Relations

**Magazines (Pro’s)**

- 7 out of 10 people over age 15 read magazines.
- Can get into an in-depth story, maybe several pages long.
- More time to work on getting the story correct and accurate.
- 10,000 + magazines in the U.S.
Investing in Media Relations

Magazines (Pro’s) Continued

• Can target a specific audience or reader; i.e. hikers, farmers, business leaders, trade journals, professional magazines, children, etc.

• Can do “human interest” stories easier.

• Longevity (copies) and access (library).
Investing in Media Relations

Magazines *(Con’s)*

- Has the most difficulty of the four in being timely – not for breaking news.
- Time consuming to write an article or even participate in its development.
- Difficult to break into majors like Time, Newsweek, Sports Illustrated, and Outdoor Life.
- Niche magazines are easier to access, but may not reach those you need to.
- Preaching to the choir oftentimes.
Investing in Media Relations

Radio (Pro’s)

• Dominated the communication field from the 1920’s thru the 1940’s (Not as much now, but still plays an important and key role).
• 99 percent of all American homes have radios.
• Can literally reach everywhere (in the woods, in the car, on a tractor); can listen while resting with eyes closed.
• Can most easily provide hourly news updates to the public (very timely).
Investing in Media Relations

Radio (Pro’s) Continued

• Approximately 12,500 radio stations in the United States; most focus on matters of local interest.
• Talk shows can focus on a specific topic; call-in shows can highlight your organization or event.
• Radio communicates messages instantly.
• Stations must broadcast a certain number of public service announcements.
Investing in Media Relations

Radio (Con’s)

- Radio is one dimensional, uses only the sense of hearing.
- Although people may have their radio on, are they actually listening to your message?
- Contact does not equal communication.
Investing in Media Relations

Radio (Con’s) Continued

- Since radio is an immediate medium, there is generally one chance to get your message across. You can’t fold it up, copy it for the bulletin board, or route it around the office.
- When a radio message impresses you, you cannot pass it on as you heard it; thus, inaccuracies can be passed on.
- PSA’s are often broadcast only during the less frequently listened to time slots.
Investing in Media Relations

Television (Pro’s)

• Second only to newspapers in the amount of advertising money attracted.
• Utilizes sight, sound, and motion; thus it’s very attractive and interesting to more viewers.
• As of 1998, over 98% of American homes had at least one TV set; 74% had 2 or more.
• Can seem very personal – warm, believable.
• Most programs and materials can be edited and/or re-taped.
Investing in Media Relations

Television (Con’s)

- Enunciation of words, presentation, appearance – must be top notch.
- Most stories covered quickly, not in-depth; story can be easily misrepresented.
- Difficult to access the longer programs.
- Must understand deadline for various newscasts.
- PSA broadcasts are often run in the wee hours; shows that pay are run in prime time.
- Sound-bytes may be only a few seconds, 20-30 seconds at most.
Investing in Media Relations

For more information, contact:

Dan B. Kincaid
USDA - Forest Service
Wayne National Forest, Athens Ranger District
13700 U.S. Highway 33
Nelsonville, OH 45764

Telephone: 740-753-0101
e-mail: dkincaid@fs.fed.us
When the Reporter Calls…

Interview techniques for the successful interview
Mass Media Approaches

• Advertisements
• PSAs
• Interviews
• News Releases
• Press Kits

• Letters to the Editor
• Web Sites
• E-mail
• Press Conferences
• Fact Sheets
## Interviews

### Advantages
- Identify you as an authority
- Personal appeal
- Human interest
- Wide exposure

### Disadvantages
- Advance preparation
- Difficult to arrange
- Need speaking skills
Ten Commandments of Media Relations

I. Be open and cooperative. Never lie.
II. Personalize the organization
III. Develop media contacts
IV. Take good stories to them
V. Respond quickly
Ten Commandments of Media Relations

VI. Never say “No Comment”

VII. It’s OK to say, “I Don’t Know” (But I’ll find out)

VIII. Confess and repent

IX. Use the big dump

X. Prepare for a media disaster
Interview Tips

Rule #1: Thou Shall Think Before Thou Speaks.
Key Messages

• Simplify in the most basic terms
• Connect to people
• Frame message for action
• Distill to a catchy slogan if possible
• Repeat, repeat, repeat
When Facing the Media

• First impressions are critical
• Eye contact is vital to credibility
• Write out 3-5 brief points to make
• Remain calm – don’t let noises or abrasive questions affect you
• Listen to the entire question
When Facing the Media:

- Keep answers short
- Use personal pronouns and active verbs
- Don’t use jargon
- Use word pictures and analogies
- Use transitional phrases to control the interview and return to your points
When Facing the Media:

• Never repeat a negative
• Don’t let a false statement go unanswered
• Never lie. If you don’t know, say so.
• Know when to stop talking
• Do your homework
• Think before you answer
Use the FACE Formula

• F - Feelings - how does it feel?
• A - Analyze - put in perspective, use analogies
• C - Compelling C’s
  Catastrophe   Crisis
  Conflict     Change
  Crime & Corruption  Color
• E - Energy - how the quote is delivered
TV Interview Tips

- Dress appropriately
- Color counts
- Swivel chair hazards
- Detail counts
- Hair
- Eyeglasses
- Sit up straight
- Look at the reporter, not the camera
Controlling the Interview

- Bridging - going from the subject you are asked about to the subject you wish to discuss
- Flagging - telling someone that the next thing you are going to tell them is important
- Hooking - baiting the reporter to ask you the next predetermined question
Ambush Interview Tips

- Don’t panic, take control
- Be friendly, cooperative
- Maintain good eye contact
- Remember your rights
  - to change locations
  - to collect thoughts
- Take initiative to end the interview
Buying Time

- Ask the reporter to repeat or rephrase the question
- Discuss background of the question
- Refer back to previous comments
- Think out loud
Questions You Don’t Have to Answer

- Legal case pending
- Answer for a third party
- Personal questions
- Irrelevant
- Competitive nature
- Outside area of expertise
Questions to Watch

- “A” or “B”
- Loaded or faulty questions
- “What if . . .”
- Ranking questions
- Giving advice
Setting the Record Straight

- Call the reporter
- Letters to the editor
- Official statements
- Crisis releases
- Guest editorial(s) or op-eds
Be a Corporate Poster Boy/Girl

Not just a cutie
but a thinker
Review of PR Basic Principles

• There is an issue to address
• With a history to take into account
• Objectives have to be set
• With respect to the current situation
• And audiences have to be targeted
• While messages have to be developed,
• Tools and vehicles have to be selected
• Evaluation must be performed
Your mindset

• From issue determination to strategic considerations: be rational
• When selecting audiences and developing messages: get personal
• While producing tools and vehicles: be creative
Special Events and Promotional Items with Claude Léger, Canadian Forest Service

Content

• Introduction (10 min.)
• Practical exercise (40 min)
• Wrap-up (10 min)
Special Events and Promotional Items
Special Events and Promotional Items

Introduction

• International Forest Partnership Program
  – High-profile international public relations
  – Canadian Council of Forest Ministers Program

• Content: facts about Canadian forests and forest products

• Vehicles: fairs and exhibits, media relations, hosting foreign delegations, seminars, good ol’ PR
Special Events and Promotional Items

• To which we should add: ceremonies, theme days and weeks

• Promotional items: T-shirts, pins, pens, fridge magnets, book marks, gizzmos, bébelles and what not.

• Examples
Exhibits
Ceremonies
Book launch
Delegations
Outreach
Outreach
Special Events and Promotional Items

• Credibility
• Human presence
• Pros
• Cons
Special Events and Promotional Items

Practical exercise

• The class will divide in 5 groups
• Each group will be attributed a special event or a promotional item and defend it:
  – A tree-planting ceremony
  – A Forest Day
  – The launch of a publication
  – A T-shirt
  – A Frisbee
Special Events and Promotional Items

Conclusion

• Importance of distancing

• Re-validation

• Make a difference in a way your audiences will appreciate
Public Consultations

Jean Cinq-Mars
President - Wildlife Habitat Canada
&
Chair - National Forest Strategy Coalition (Canada)
Content

• Introduction to public consultations
• Practical exercise
Public Consultation

• Why hold consultations?
• Whom to consult?
• How to consult?
• When to consult?
• Case Study: Canada’s National Forest Strategy
Practical exercise

• Introduction of participants (5 min.)
• 2 groups: pros and cons
• Discussion period (20 min.)
• Reports from both groups (10 min.)
• Plenary discussion (15 min.)
• Closing remarks (10 mins)
A Road Through an Old-Growth Forest

Before the construction of a road going through an old-growth forest, the Department of Transport held public consultations on the project.

Many factors have to be considered:

- Impacts on the forest
- Wildlife
- Economic and social benefits for a region whose economy has collapsed
Join Geocaching -

The sport where YOU are the search engine™

A GPS device and a hunger for adventure are all you need for high tech treasure hunting. Here you can find the latest caches in this fun and exciting sport.

Geocaches can now be found in over 200 countries!

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You can read our Frequently Asked Questions page to learn about the sport and read the guide to finding your first cache. If there are no caches nearby, learn how to create a first cache in your area. The online discussion forums are also a great source for answers.

Jeep 4x4 Cache In Adventure: It's your chance to go anywhere, do anything in search of 4x4 Jeep 4x4 Travel Bugs located in caches across the U.S. Click here to find one near you and to enter our sweepstakes to win one of three new Jeep 4x4s.

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Geocaching.com has partnered with REI to help you gear up for your next outdoor adventure. Getting started with geocaching? Visit REI.com for GPS Receivers from Garmin and Magellan. Or you can check out the best of the day at REI-OUTLET.

Support Geocaching: Become a Premium Member
Help support the web site and get access to premium features on Geocaching.com. Become a Premium Member today.

Benchmark hunting
You can now search for NGS Benchmarks in the US. Check out benchmark hunting.

Create an Account
Create an account, and we'll let you know when new caches are hidden in your area! You'll also be able to add to the virtual log when you find a cache. Create an account now.

Upcoming Event Caches

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
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<td>10/1/2004</td>
<td>Cache In!</td>
<td>by CEC (GCKMB)</td>
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Support: Become a Premium Member
Help support the web site and get access to premium features on Geocaching.com. Become a Premium Member today.

Benchmark hunting
You can now search for NGS Benchmarks in the US. Check out benchmark hunting.

Create an Account
Create an account, and we'll let you know when new caches are hidden in your area! You'll also be able to add to the virtual log when you find a cache. Create a account now.

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Opening Thoughts

“There are only two groups of people who are referred to as users.”

--Unknown
Principles for effective Web sites

- Know your audience
- Understand the habits of Web users and design accordingly
- Promote your site and measure success
- Update and maintain your content
- Be willing to take chances and make mistakes (lessons learned)
- Keep a constant dialogue with your users
Know your Audience

- University Faculty
- High School faculty
- Student
- Recreation User
- Forest Consultant
- Retired
- International
- State Agency
- USDA Forest Service
- Other Federal Agency
- Non-Government Organization (NGO)
- Forest Industry, Recreation
- Forest Industry, Wood Products
- Forest Industry, Other Products
- Non-Industry Forest Land Owner (<100 acres)
- Non-Industry Forest Land Owner (>100 acres)
Understand the habits of Web users and design accordingly

eEyetracking report on web use

“What We Saw When We Looked Through Their Eyes “
What We Saw When We Looked Through Their Eyes
What We Saw When We Looked Through Their Eyes

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Priority 1</th>
<th>Priority 2</th>
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Usable Content

- Smaller type encourages focused viewing behavior (that is, reading the words), while larger type promotes lighter scanning.

- On average, a headline has less than a second of a site visitor's attention.

- Shorter paragraphs performed better in Eyetrack III research than longer ones.

- Larger online images hold the eye longer than smaller images.

- Navigation placed at the top of a homepage performed best.
Overall, we observed that participants were more likely to correctly recall facts, names, and places when they were presented with that information in a text format.

However new, unfamiliar, conceptual information was more accurately recalled when participants received it in a multimedia graphic format.
Promote your site

- Face to Face (CIF/SAF Meetings)
- Links from other sites
- Search engines (use meta tags)
- Internal communications (site promotion begins at home)
Measuring Success

- User feedback (e.g. face-to-face, email, phone)
- Focus groups
- Web site statistics
Measuring Success

Southern Research Station

Analyzed requests from Jan 01 2004 to Oct 02 2004

- Successful requests: 4,198,456
- Average successful requests for pages per day: 14,979
- Average data transferred per day: 1.571 gigabytes
Update and maintain your content

- Keep your content fresh and growing but do not update for the sake of updating
- Be careful when changing your navigation
- Backup your data!
- Hire zealots!
Be willing to take chances and make mistakes (lessons learned)

- Online chat with scientists

- “I saw a neat site that uses flash, we need that too!”

- “This is a very popular publication – post it on the Web, people will love that!”
Be willing to take chances and make mistakes (lessons learned)

Just because you can do it does not mean it should be done

- RSS feeds
- Blinking text / animation
- Unprepared for demand: Live Webcam at Mt. St. Helens
Keep a constant dialogue with your users

- Email, phone, face-to-face, and feedback forms
- Accept feedback that you are given
- Use mailing lists (listserv) but NEVER spam!
Obligatory Photos

Southern Research Station
www.srs.fs.usda.gov

and Treesearch
www.treesearch.fs.fed.us
The USDA Forest Service Southern Research Station's mission is to create the science and technology needed to sustain and enhance southern forest ecosystems and the benefits they provide.

**Current Highlights**

**Featured Topic:** A Tool Kit for Authors

Whether you’re an SRS researcher, a university cooperator, or a contract editor, you can click here for everything you need to know about publishing with the Southern Research Station.


**Kudzu and invasive plants.**

View USDA Forest Service research publications relating to Kudzu and invasive plants online.

**Our Scientists and Their Research**

- Research Publications - We have 7425 publications online that you can view and print
- Research Work Units and Programs - Where are our labs and offices located?
- Directory of Research Scientists - Learn about our scientists and their work.

**Station Information**

Visit these links to learn more about the mission, responsibilities, and accomplishments of the Southern Research Station:

- Introduction to the Station
- Greetings from the Director
- Congressional Corner - A State-by-State Update on Forest Research in the South
- Historical Papers, Reports, Photos
- 2002 Annual Report
- SRS Research News
- Newsletters
- News Releases
- Recent Grant Announcements
- Public Electronic Mailing Lists

**Additional Information**

- Careers in Forest Service Research and Development - Employment Information
- Other Links of Interest
- Photo Gallery - Views From Around the Station
- Especially for Kids
- Of Interest to Forest Landowners
- Test your knowledge with our Forestry Quiz
- Conversion Table between Metric Units and English Units
- Glossaries

**Strategic Framework**
Final Thoughts

“It is not the strongest of the species that survives, nor the most intelligent that survives. It is the one that is the most adaptable to change.”

-- Charles Darwin