

Pacific Region
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
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U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

A Field Guide To Outreach



Dear Fish and Wildlife Professional,

How can we solve our fish and wildlife issues? As Aldo Leopold believed, solving the biological problems is relatively easy. Dealing with the people side of fish and wildlife management is the true challenge.

How can we solve our people issues? Often, by raising awareness and providing information about issues and alternative approaches we can alter outcomes or even prevent conflicts! Building relationships with people and fostering public understanding can help ensure a more secure future for America's fish and wildlife and their habitats. Sometimes it's as simple as telling people what we are doing and why. This is what we call outreach.

"But, wait," you may be saying. "I wasn't trained for this! I'm a biologist, or a refuge manager, or a fish culturist. I don't know how to write a news release, entice more visitors to my field station, or handle a hot issue! I've never called a congressman's office or given a TV news interview! I don't know how to write text for a brochure or initiate a partnership."

*We recognize that you might want some help. A good way to start is to develop an outreach plan to address an outreach need at your office or field station. A plan keeps you focused and identifies for your supervisor the areas where you need additional skills or resources. We have designed this "field guide" to help you successfully tackle outreach planning as a part of fish and wildlife management. Just as a species field guide gives you clues to an animal's or plant's identity, **A Field Guide To Outreach** can help you identify and organize the key elements of an effective outreach plan.*

*The sequence in **A Field Guide To Outreach** follows the outline of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's outreach plan format, which also can be found in the National Outreach Strategy document and memoranda from Service Director Jamie Rappaport Clark. When you have answered all the questions in this field guide, you will have an outreach plan.*

As Director Clark reminds us, outreach is everyone's job. It is a critical part of our profession — aware, knowledgeable and interested citizens are imperative to our success! We hope this field guide makes your job easier.

A Field Guide To Outreach Writing Team:


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You can develop a complete outreach plan by working through these planning steps. Work alone or assemble a team to answer these questions. The sequence of questions is designed to build one answer on another, but you can answer them in any order that works best for you.

Use the ample white space on these pages to make notes as you go through the steps.

“Field marks”  for each question offer advice and tips to help you through the process.

1. What is the issue?
2. What are the basic facts about the issue?
3. What are your communication goals?
4. What is the message?
5. Who are the interested parties?
6. Are there any key dates?
7. What strategies will you use?
8. What materials do you need?
9. What is your action plan?
10. How will you evaluate the success of your plan?

A special thanks to the early contributors to this project:

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What Is The Issue?

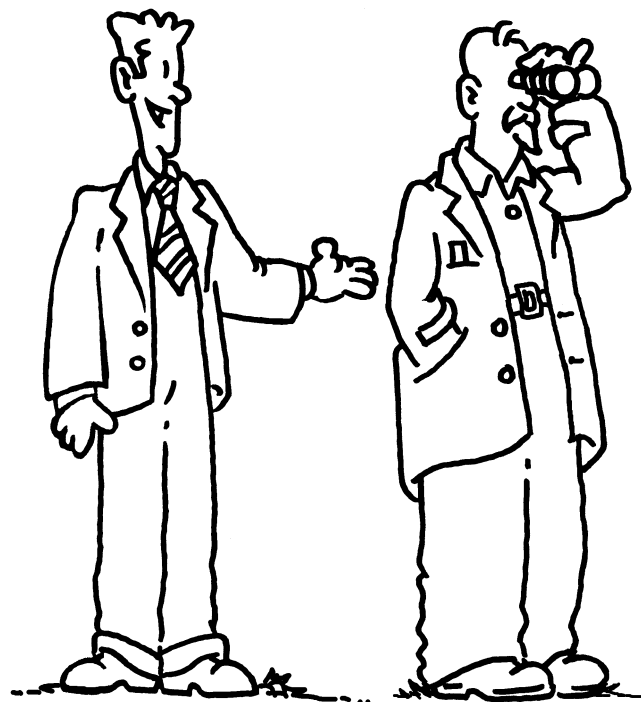
Describe the issue so everyone understands the problem that your outreach plan is intended to address.

Examples:

- Visitors need a self-guided tour because we don't always have staff available to help them.
- We need signs to entice visitors to our field station and help them find their way around once they are here. Support from adjacent landowners and approval by the county commissioners are needed before signs can be installed.
- We need to emergency list a species under the Endangered Species Act because its habitat is being destroyed. The listing will be controversial because it will halt county road construction in a critical watershed.
- We're about to begin a major law enforcement operation. Service special agents need to be perceived as diligent, fair and honest enforcers of federal wildlife laws.
- The Service is considering reclassifying or delisting some wolf populations.
- The Service is writing a management plan that will set objectives for wildlife population levels and will analyze different approaches to predation management to aid in meeting those objectives.
- The Service completed a contaminants survey on some lands it proposes to acquire for a new refuge. The survey found that wildlife have been exposed to organochlorine pesticides. Cleanup to a standard that poses low or no risk to wildlife health is desired before the lands become part of the National Wildlife Refuge System.



Field Marks: Keep it short and simple. Three sentences or a short paragraph should do it. This statement helps keep everyone focused.



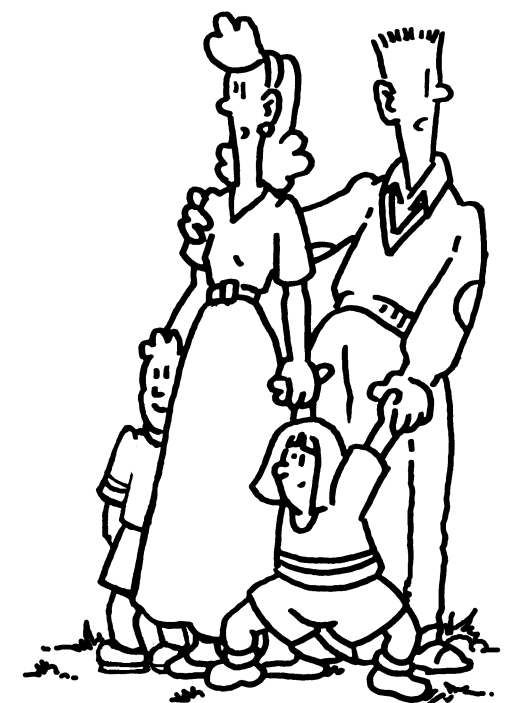
What Are Some Basic Facts About The Issue?

Give some background about the issue using either bullet statements or short paragraphs. These are factual statements about the issue that further describe it, tell who it affects, and how it affects fish and wildlife resources.

Examples:

- The field station receives 25,000 visits a year.
- The Service is reviewing the recovery status of gray wolf populations in the U.S.
- The county supervisors passed a resolution in June 1997 opposing establishment of a new refuge due to concerns about loss of tax revenues.
- Scientists estimate that 27 percent of the remaining habitat for the bull trout has been destroyed by the county's road construction project.
- The Service studied 17 sites for current exposure and assessment of risk level for wildlife using the Rocky Mountain Arsenal's index of relative risk.

Field Marks: Your basic facts should demonstrate why this is an important issue that needs to be solved and why outreach is necessary to help solve it.



What Are Your Communication Goals?

What do you hope to achieve by conducting outreach on this issue?

- *improved knowledge?*
- *accurate recognition of the agency and its mission?*
- *change in attitude?*
- *change in behavior?*

Describe your goals in specific detail so you can measure whether you have achieved them.

Examples:

- Advise partners that we are considering this action and solicit their input.
- Ensure that partners are not surprised by a premature announcement in the news.
- Demonstrate that wolf recovery is a success story, showing that endangered species can be conserved and restored.
- Ensure accurate news reports.
- Identify the Fish and Wildlife Service as the right agency to solve this problem.
- Acknowledge that this action may hurt some people but doing nothing is not an option.
- Clarify the details of a complicated decision.
- Inform visitors of the opportunities available at this field station.
- Make visitors aware of the important role of hatcheries in Columbia River salmon recovery.



Field Marks: After you have written your communication goals, check them against your outreach issue. If your goals are achieved, will they solve your outreach problem?



What Is Your Message?

What are the key messages you want your audiences to know or understand?

Whenever possible, try to incorporate the Fish and Wildlife Service's three basic messages.

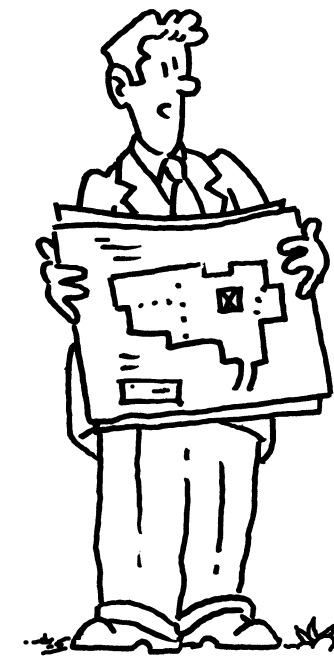
Examples:

- Wolves are recovering thanks to determined conservation efforts and public support. Some populations may be eligible for delisting or reclassification under the Endangered Species Act. A formal proposal and public comment period will be announced later this year.
- The Endangered Species Act works.



Field Marks: Repetition is the key to communicating a message. It's like hearing a song on the radio: the more times you hear the song the better you can remember the words and the melody. It may take seven or eight playings for the song's message to sink in, but finally you know most of the words.

You may have lots of things you want your audience to know, but resist the temptation to say too much. People won't remember several messages but they will remember one strong one. Decide what your most important message is and then repeat it over and over again until you are sure people understand it.



The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Three Basic Messages

The National Outreach Strategy notes that Americans want to know three basic things about the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service: who we are, what we do, and why we do it. All Service programs and activities can be explained using one or more of the following messages:

- The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is a Federal agency whose mission, working with others, is to conserve fish and wildlife and their habitats.
- The Service helps protect a healthy environment for people, fish, and wildlife.
- The Service helps Americans conserve and enjoy the outdoors.

Who Needs To Know?

Who is your target audience for each of your goals? They may not be the same.

Identify groups and individuals who will be affected by your issue, who *think* they will be affected, and who need to know about it. Try to be as specific as possible.

Be strategic in selecting your audience. You don't need to send 500 faxes.

Analyze what you know about each of your audiences.

■ What does the audience already know about your station, project, program, or issue?

■ How do they usually get information?

■ How does the audience view your agency?

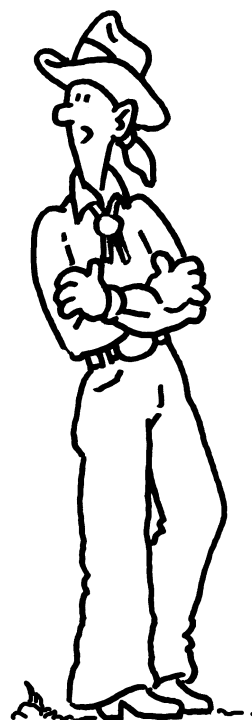
■ What are your audience's attitudes or beliefs about your station, program, project, or issue? Are these attitudes or beliefs something that you can influence?

■ What current behaviors of your audience affect what you are trying to accomplish? Are these behaviors something that you can influence?

Now that you've thought about your audiences, write one summary statement that characterizes each target audience.

Begin filling out the **Key Contact Table*** for your outreach plan.

*see Appendix



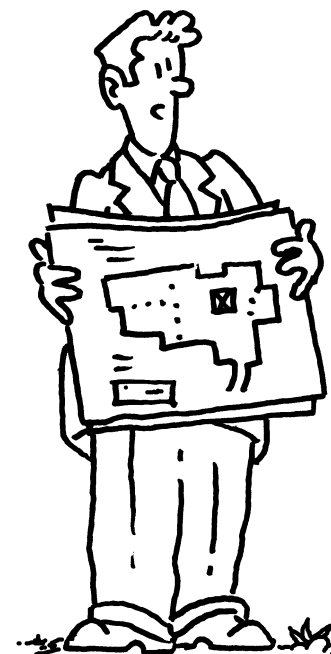
Field Marks: Remember that there's no such thing as the general public. You may need to do some research to find out who should be on your list of audiences. Don't forget influential community leaders, Service and Department officials, members of Congress, other Federal, state and local agency officials, tribes, trade organizations, agricultural and business interests, and conservation groups.

Field Marks: Don't over-react to time pressure. The deadline may be the arbitrary result of someone's decision to solve a problem by a certain date when there isn't any rationale for rushing. Find out if your deadline is hard (i.e., court-ordered, commitment to Congress) or soft. Know where you have flexibility.



Once you build a key contacts master list...

You will be able to use it to generate a Key Contacts Table for many projects or issues. Simply review the key contacts database and eliminate any persons or organizations that are not appropriate for your current outreach plan.



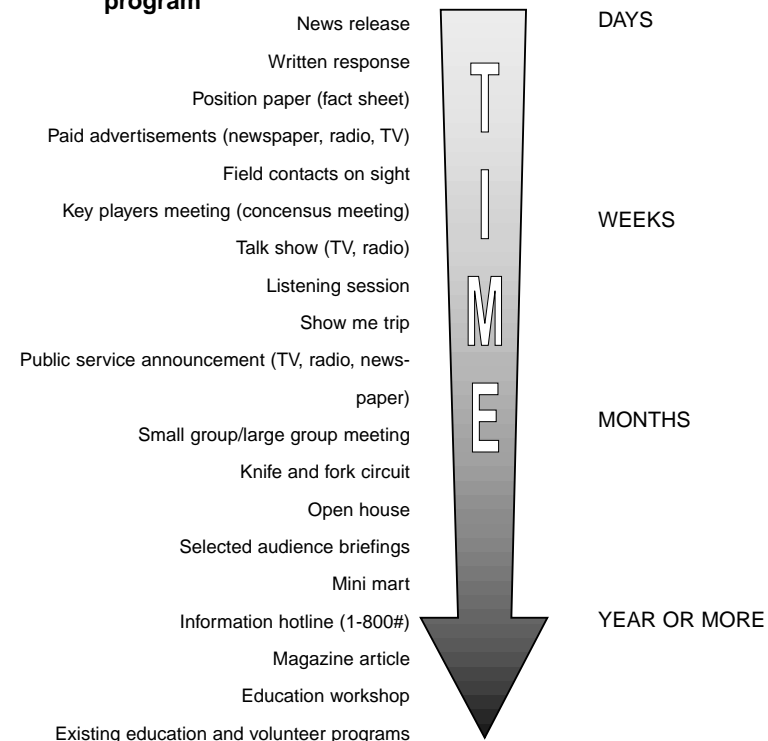
Are There Key Dates Or A Timeline?

Is there a specific date to which this issue and outreach plan are tied?

Do you have a timeline for key steps in your outreach strategy?

TIMING IS EVERYTHING!

Timeline considerations when planning your public involvement program



Examples:

- Before a notice is published in the **Federal Register** or a document is released to the public.
- On the day a notice is published in the **Federal Register** or a document is released to the public.
- Date of the Interior Secretary's visit.
- Peak tourism season in the area.
- Start of project construction.
- Date of open house or public meeting.
- When the salmon return to the hatchery.

What Is Your Strategy For Implementing This Outreach Plan?

List the activities that you will use in this outreach effort. Are they the most appropriate ones to meet your goals and reach your target audiences?

Examples:

- Provide advance notice to partners by calling them on the day before the decision is announced.

- Hold a major news event with Secretary Babbitt at a location where television can film captive wolves.

- Fax a news release to all regional daily newspapers and mail it to all weeklies.

- Host an open house to show community leaders, tourism businesses, and interested visitors the new information signs at your field station.

- In partnership with The Nature Conservancy, hold a dedication ceremony to celebrate the land transfer from TNC to the refuge.

- Invite the Regional Director to be a featured speaker.

- Distribute a brochure that describes the problem and how the public can help solve it.

- Take a traveling exhibit to community festivals, fairs, and other events.

- Hold a public hearing to obtain public comments on the proposal.

- The project leader will deliver a speech at a major conference.

- Distribute a video that describes the project and its implementation.

What resources do you have to devote to this outreach effort? Are there partners who can help you with staffing, design expertise, or cost sharing?



Field Marks: There are hundreds of outreach strategies, from the perfect brochure to a one hour television program! Don't become distracted by the most conspicuous option; consider other alternatives. Realistically, most of the outreach strategies you pick will be dictated by the amount of time, staff and funds available.



What Materials Or Tools Do You Need?

What outreach materials or tools are most appropriate to meeting your goals and implementing your strategy? List the materials or tools to be used in this outreach effort.

Has each audience been addressed?

What personnel, funds, and supplies are needed to create your outreach materials or tools? Are they available? Can they be produced within your timeline? Are there any partners who can help you?

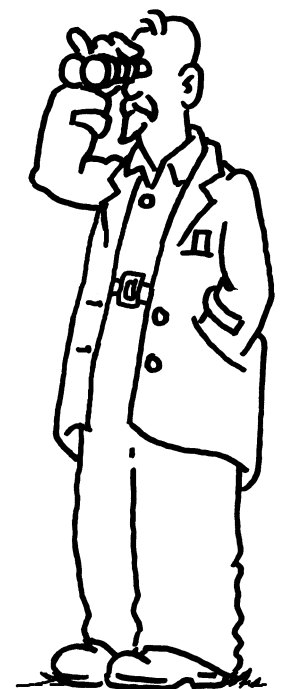


Field Marks: Consider whether the materials and tools you are using are appropriate for the communication preferences of your audiences. For example, a workbook that walks people through several alternative development plans and asks for comments in essay form may be better received by an audience composed of college-educated professionals.

Materials Checklist:

- press release*
- fact sheet*
- question-and-answer sheet*
- key contact table*
- talking points
- speech
- chronology
- B-roll (raw video without narration shot in Beta format that can be spliced into a TV news broadcast with voice over narration added in the studio)
- charts
- maps
- photos
- video
- field station brochure
- cover letter
- newsletter

*required for all significant actions (see U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Director Jamie Rappaport Clark's memorandum of November 2, 1998)



What Is Your Action Plan?

An action plan should describe all steps that need to be taken, identify the responsible person(s), and the date when the action should occur.

You may want to use the **Priority Matrix** to help you decide which outreach activity to implement first.

Examples:

Action: Brief Service Director, Assistant Director-Refuges and Wildlife, and Assistant Secretary. Assigned to: Badgley, Shake, Voros, Roy Due: 10/30/98.

Action: Prepare a brief chronology of events leading up to issuance of the proposed rule in cooperation with the Solicitor's office, biological and regional staff. Assigned to: Carroll Due: 5/15/98

Action: Prepare and distribute b-roll (color, beta-sp format) to appropriate TV outlets in the Northwest. Keep more copies on hand to distribute if need arises. Assigned to: Zimmer Due: 5/15/98

Action: Submit brochure text and color slides to EPIC for production of self-guiding tour brochure. Assigned to: Smith Due: 2/12/97

Field Marks: Be sure to include enough detail so someone else could implement the plan in your absence. Ask a colleague to review your plan and give you feedback. Is it clear what is expected?



How Will You Measure Success?

Evaluation is the most over-looked step in planning. How will you know that your outreach plan is a success and that your goals have been met?

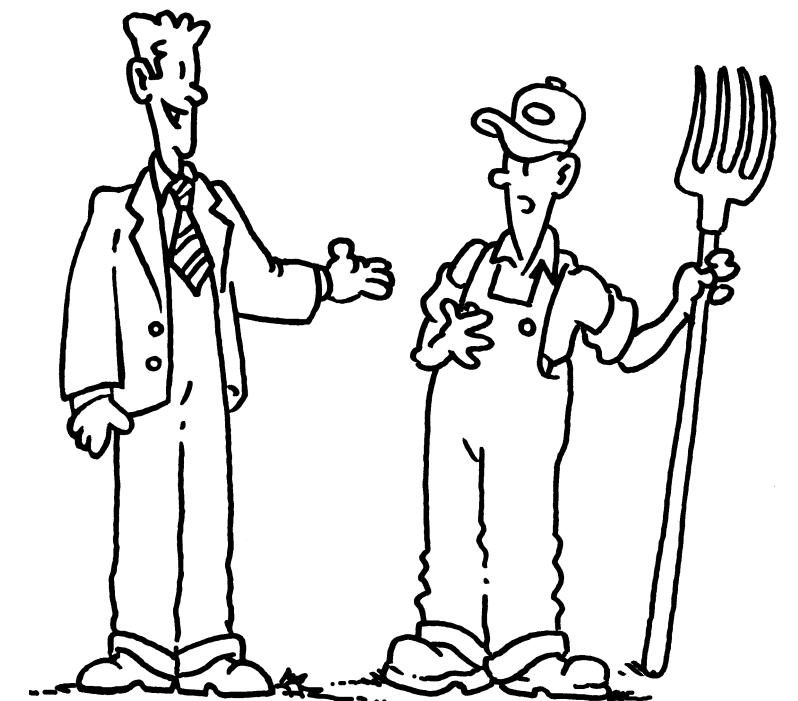
Decide what aspects of your outreach plan you want to evaluate. These might include structure (e.g., were all interests represented?), outcome (e.g., to what extent did the outreach effort meet its objectives?), or audience satisfaction.

Evaluation methods can be either formal or informal. Formal methods include focus groups, surveys, and one-on-one interviews. Informal methods include analyzing newspaper stories, interest group newsletter articles, staff debriefings, and agency and audience feedback.

Will you involve your target audiences in measuring success? Remember to look at how your audiences feel about your outreach efforts and the activities and materials you used. Ask them if you could have done anything better.

Field Marks: Decide when to declare success ... and when to adjust, change, or stop your approach because it isn't accomplishing what you hoped it would.

Success is often difficult to measure because our most troubling issues are not amenable to purely technical one-time solutions. Like medical problems, our issues may range from broken bones that require purely technical remedies to more serious illness, such as diabetes, that require on-going coordinated treatment involving the physician, patient, and the patient's family, friends, and co-workers.



Dear Fish and Wildlife Professional,

Congratulations! If you have gotten this far and answered all the questions, you should have an outreach plan ready for implementation.

Now the fun of putting your plan to work begins! Keep focused on your messages and determine the right approaches for the audiences you need to reach. Remember to keep evaluating your outreach efforts so you can improve the next time.

If you need advice or feedback on your outreach plan, or you find yourself stuck on one of the questions, call your agency's External Affairs/Public Affairs office or your local Information and Education Specialist or Outreach Specialist.

Please let us know how this outreach planning guide worked for you. We also hope you will share your successes — and learning experiences — with us so we all can improve our outreach efforts.

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Key Contacts Table

Contact Date	
FWS Contact (Name/office)	
Method of Contact	
Phone & Fax	
Address	
Name/Title of Contact	
Name of Office to be Contacted	

Outreach Plan Worksheet

Issue Program Project Field Station

Issue:
Basic Facts About Issue:
Communication Goals:
Message:

Interested Parties/Audiences:
Key Date:
Materials and Tools:
Strategies:

Action Plan:

Evaluation Methods:

Outreach Priority Matrix For _____ Audience

<i>Strategy/Materials</i>	<i>Meets goals?</i>	<i>Produce in-house</i>	<i>Product by contract?</i>	<i>Cost</i>	<i>FTEs</i>	<i>Time to accomplish</i>	<i>Partners (Who?)</i>

inside back cover