

Media Outreach and Effectiveness

Keeping Your
Community Informed



Public Information

- In order to be effective, conservation districts need to inform their communities of their activities
- Keep the public informed of plans of work and accomplishments
- If (when) controversies arise, a good working relationship with the media can help get your message out quickly and accurately

Public Relations Strategy

- Accuracy
- Crisis Management
- Media Policy
- Spokespeople

Get the Message Straight

- Designate one person to be the district's spokesperson (manager, chairman, supervisor)
- However, everyone should be informed
- Spokesperson must understand the issues, goals and concerns of the district in order to give clear, concise and factual information

Focus on the News

- One message at a time for short news stories or radio briefs
- Do NOT give personal opinions
- Use “the board” “the conservation district”

Building Media Relationships

- Take time to develop relationships
- Go to lunch, host media at events, cover expenses
- Nominate for awards
- Keep Media Contact List up to date
- Buy advertising space
- Send thank-you to contacts whether or not your story ran

Press Release Structure

- Call your contact for format – fax, e-mail, hard copy, etc.
- Answer the questions Who? What? Where? When? Why? How?
- One page in length
- Typed and double spaced
- Covers one subject
- Include contact person's name and number

Press Release Structure (continued)

- Make it Interesting
- Include a catchy lead, or something memorable in the first paragraph
- Include high quality, action photos and photo cutlines whenever possible

Interviews

- Respond quickly to requests for interviews
- Be prepared, always know the topic
- Make your points clear
- Develop a 3-point message to ensure message is effective
- Call back if you aren't prepared

Interviews (continued)

- Bridge when asked about an issue not related to your topic
- Dress professionally
- Never go “off the record”
- Don’t discuss what you don’t understand – it’s okay to say “I don’t know, but I’ll get back to you with a correct answer.”

Summary



- Know what you want to say
- Be knowledgeable, concise and focused
- Don't use "I"
- Relax
- Treat the media fairly and professionally