U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service ■ Region 1 ■ Volume 8, Number 1 ■ Winter 2002

OUT & About

The Pacific Region Outreach Newsletter

Theme: Working with Congress

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Upcoming Themes:
Spring — Coastal/Marine
Summer — Fire
Fall — Land Protection
Winter — Centennial

Show Them Firsthand

Get elected officials on the ground to build PR

By Barbara Todd Bassler and Meggan Laxalt

How well do you know your congressional staffs?

Are you comfortable picking up the phone to ask them a question?

Are they willing to contact you at a moment's notice for a quick tip or informative answers?

If not, you should consider offering them a special tour of your projects to build a relationship and showcase your efforts.

At the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Office, newly-positioned Oregon State Supervisor Kemper McMaster knew he would need to work with elected officials he had never met.

He saw this as an opportunity for his staff to build a stronger relationship with people from congressional offices.

In Idaho, Snake River Field Office Supervisor Bob Ruesink was very familiar with Idaho's contacts, but he recognized a need to strengthen those relationships and increase communication within his state.

The supervisors enlisted their two information and education specialists to tackle the task.

After we brainstormed many possibilities, we agreed that the best way to accomplish this was to offer

See **SHOW THEM** ... *Page 12*

Photo by: Meggan Laxalt, USFWS

Congressional staff enjoy airboat tour.

Salmon Festival Opens Doors

Event earns high marks from legislators and staff

By Corky Broaddus

Almost daily, news about salmon recovery hits the front page of Northwest newspapers. Agencies provide policy statements, scientists reveal the latest technical findings, and elected officials share opinions about issues surrounding the stories.

These stories are rich in complexity and controversy. It is our job to find ways for the public to see their positive aspects, view conservation in action, and perhaps put aside differences to appreciate everything there is about salmon.

The Wenatchee River Salmon Festival, held at Washington's Leavenworth National Fish Hatchery, provides just such an opportunity. The underlying focus of the event is natural resource education. Each year we send formal invitation letters to agency dignitaries, school administrators, sponsors, and elected officials and their staffs. We don't just want them to be "talking heads;" we want them to see how important salmon are to our community by participating in the festival.

U. S. Senator Patty Murray, Congressman Doc Hastings, State Senator Bob Morton, Speaker of the House Clyde Ballard, and others

See **SALMON FESTIVAL** ... *Page 7*

Out & About

Out & About is published quarterly for Region 1 Fish and Wildlife Service employees.

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SUBMISSIONS
We welcome your submissions to **Out & About.** Regular sections in the newsletter are:
- Feature Articles
- Case Studies
- Outreach Accomplishments
- Trainings & Workshops
- Announcements
- Q & A
- Letters to the Editor
- Outreach Resources

Articles should be submitted by E-mail or 3-1/2 inch floppy and run 150 to 500 words. Gear writing to newsletter style; avoid technical jargon. Photos welcome. Publication is not guaranteed, though every effort will be made to use submissions.

Submit articles to Jeanne Clark:
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E-mail: jeanne_clark@fws.gov

SUBMISSION DEADLINES

Spring	April 1
Summer	May 15
Fall	August 15
Winter	November 15

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NATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

Life on the Hill

Read this D.C. perspective about working with congressional staff

By Alexandra Pitts

Like many in the Fish and Wildlife Service, when I was working as a botanist and forester I had little interest in or time for politics. That changed with an opportunity to work as a legislative assistant for a Member of Congress focusing on natural resources and agriculture issues.

In my almost seven years on Capitol Hill, I worked in both House and Senate personal offices, as well as on the House Agriculture Committee. Here I learned first-hand about the complicated intersection between politics and natural resources management.

Since joining the Service three and a half years ago, I am frequently asked for tips about how to work with legislators and their staffs during visits to the Hill.

The real key to success is understanding that House, Senate, and committee staffs each have different needs and functions. Get to personally know each member of the staff and tailor your visit to meet their needs.

In general, personal office staff for Members of Congress are very tied to constituent needs, services, and requests. This is true in both the House and Senate, but it is particularly the case in the House.

Members' personal staff are also not usually well-versed in natural resources issues — a challenge compounded by very high turnover. One of the most common comments I hear from people throughout the Service is how frustrating it is to continually brief new staff on the same issues.

Since this condition just comes with the territory, I advise routinely touching bases with your Member's natural resources staff, even it if turns out to be a short-term relationship. This will enable you to keep abreast of staff changes and build a solid foundation with the office for the time when you may need it.

Staff that support congressional committees are more focused on policy issues within their committee's jurisdiction. In general, they have been around longer and have a better understanding of the policy issues than personal staffs. Committee staffs may have a strong district or state bias and Members usually favor policy approaches that benefit their districts or states.

With this in mind, how do you approach staff? First, it is important to remember that all congressional staff work incredibly long and hectic hours, on a schedule that is not necessarily their own. You and others may go to great effort and expense to come to Washington D.C. for your visit, only to find that your appointment has been bumped to another time, or even canceled because of an urgent request from their boss.

Here are some things to remember to boost your chances for a successful visit to the Hill:

- Be very sure to work with your regional congressional liaison, David Patte, about the timing and details of your visit.
- Make sure there is real need for a visit. Is there an impending implementation deadline or event? Those are great reasons for a meeting.
- Be flexible. Remember that staff may need to reschedule your meeting at the last minute. Bring some material to read in case you must wait, or have other work that can be accomplished if the delay is longer.
- Know your audience and their needs. When preparing for your visit think about what is important from the Member and staff perspective. Be sure to tell the Service's story in a way that acknowledges the Member's interests and needs.
- Only make promises you can keep (and no lobbying allowed). Be prompt with promised follow up.

These same pointers can be applied to visits with your Members' staffs in your home state.

Whether it's a meeting at their local office or a trip to the Hill, both can be exciting experiences and offer outstanding opportunities to promote the positive role that the Service is playing within their districts.

Alexandra Pitts is the chief of Congressional and Legislative Affairs, Washington D.C. Office.

Cultivating Ties with Capitol Hill

Bone up on how to be effective with legislators

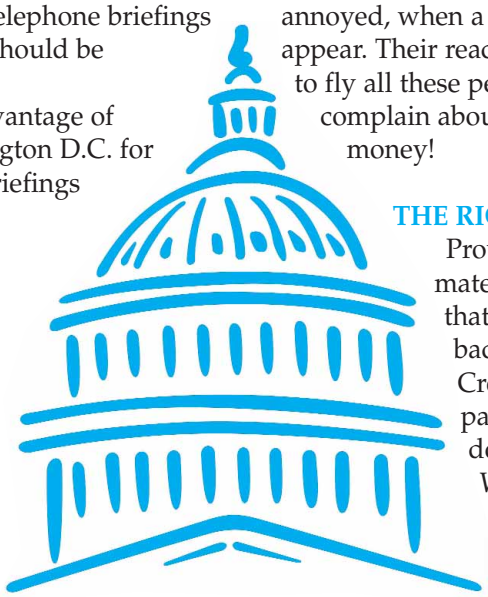
By David Patte

Is a proposed action drawing fire from local constituents? Are you about to eliminate a recreational activity that has become incompatible?

The Congressional Affairs Office encourages the regional directorate and project leaders to brief congressional staff whenever the situation warrants, whether it is purely informational or a controversy is brewing.

Our "no surprises" goal is to contact congressional offices *before* issues escalate. If travel is not possible, telephone briefings and/or written material should be provided.

We also try to take advantage of planned travel to Washington D.C. for other reasons to set up briefings with congressional staff.



HOW TO SCHEDULE A BRIEFING

Briefings on Capitol Hill should be scheduled through me, your friendly congressional affairs specialist, as I am required to notify the regional directorate, the Washington Office and the Department regarding any visits.

Project leaders have the lead for making contact with their district offices. Be sure to invite congressional staff for routine site visits and provide them with regular briefings.

TIMING

When possible, we schedule Capitol Hill briefings during a recess or routine legislative business. It is very difficult to see elected representatives when major bills are on the floor or important grassroots lobbying organizations are visiting Washington D.C.

KEEP IT SHORT

Most staffers have a very tight schedule, so make your presentation brief and to the point. Don't be surprised by delays or last minute cancellations.

WHO DO I ACTUALLY SEE?

Typically, you meet with staff and not the senator or representative. The regional director does have opportunities to meet with them, so if you think you have an important issue, let us know; if it's appropriate, we'll arrange the briefing at the regional director's next meeting.

FEW IN NUMBERS

Only take a few essential people to any briefing. Staff get suspicious, and even annoyed, when a huge gaggle of "feds" appear. Their reaction: It costs a lot of money to fly all these people in and feds always complain about not having enough money!

THE RIGHT MATERIALS

Provide a limited amount of material. Use a binder with tabs that organizes the issues and background documents.

Create one page briefing papers or "powerpoint" style documents with bullets.

Whenever possible, reinforce concepts using pictures and tables. (Do not include internal briefing papers.)

DON'T BE POLITICAL

Let the staff sort out the politics. Your job is to remain professional and explain the science and the administrative record.

WHAT SHOULD I WEAR?

Fly the colors if you normally wear a uniform. If you don't, wear a coat and tie or business style clothing. Remember, security on Capitol Hill is high: Leave your pocket knife or other objects that could be construed as weapons at your hotel!

If you need advice or other assistance, please don't hesitate to contact me at 503/231-2264.

David Patte is a congressional affairs specialist in External Affairs.

"Our "no surprises" goal is to contact congressional offices before issues escalate."

Lobbying: Don't Do It!

Learn about what constitutes lobbying

By David Patte

Lobbying is any activity "intended or designed to influence in any manner a Member of Congress, to favor or oppose... any legislation or appropriation by Congress."

[18 U.S.C. Section 1913]

"Communications should inform, rather than influence, and provide information, rather than opinions."

Federal employees should know that there are strong legal limitations that restrict lobbying while on duty, or while wearing a Fish and Wildlife Service uniform or official insignia.

But it is also important for employees to feel confident about engaging in appropriate outreach and education activities.

The goal of congressional communications is to *inform*, rather than influence, and *provide information*, rather than opinions.

You may have noticed that departmental officials frequently advocate for budget increases and legislation. This is because presidentially-appointed, Senate-confirmed federal officials can lobby within their areas of responsibility.

BUDGET INFORMATION

Most gray areas and questions that we receive relate to appropriation matters. Can employees lobby for budget increases supported by the President's Budget? No they can't. Appropriations are provided through legislation, and lobbying is lobbying.

Advocating for funding levels over and above the President's budget is even worse: You can invoke the wrath of both Congress and the Administration!

Can you provide any information on budget matters? Yes, you can when asked — and we must answer *all* questions posed to us. The goal is to always provide truthful and accurate information to congressional staff, and to do so clearly, concisely, and promptly.

Given the sensitivity regarding budget questions, be sure to have the Regional Office review the material and your answer. Typically, budget questions will be forwarded to the Washington D.C. Office to be finalized and issued at the director's level. This will allow the response to include required boilerplate language and be framed in a broader context, such as how a station's priorities rank at both the regional and national level.

AUTHORIZING LEGISLATION

Similar concerns and protocol apply to questions on authorizing legislation that is pending. Employees should therefore defer to the Director's Office on any questions about the Department's support for pending legislation.

We do notify and involve project leaders whenever possible through the Department's formal process for comments. Outside of this internal process, don't be tempted to provide your opinions — stick to factual information about the underlying issues of science and/or natural resource management.

EDUCATION AND OUTREACH

Usually, congressional requests for information are about issues raised by constituents or lobbyists on Service actions, such as listing decisions, biological opinions, refuge compatibility determinations, etc.

Responding to these requests is a routine matter and should be promptly completed. Remain faithful to the administrative record and the biology to keep this outreach effort on sound footing.

Remember: No one likes surprises. Whenever possible try to provide your congressional staff with information *before* an issue becomes a "hot" news item so they can prepare and respond to inquiries in their own time frame.

If you have questions or need quick advice, please don't hesitate to contact me at 503/231-2264.

David Patte is a congressional affairs specialist in External Affairs.

How to Avoid Lobbying

Follow these tips to keep out of trouble

By David Patte

Most of the time when sharing tips we offer them in a positive vein that show how to accomplish the desired outcome. However, in the case of lobbying, the desired outcome is avoidance, so the active verb is "do not."

- Do not engage in political activity, such as endorsing a political candidate or legislation while on duty or while wearing a Service uniform or official insignia.
- Do not take a position, other than the administration's "official" position, on current or pending legislation. Defer to others if you don't know the administration's official position.
- Do not appeal to the public to contact their elected representatives in order to influence legislation.
- Be familiar with regulations on permitted and prohibited political activities for federal employees (5 CFR Part 734 available on the web at www.access.gpo.gov/nara/aboutcfr.html).

Though this is not light reading, you should request and read the Anti-Lobbying Act, sections of annual appropriations bills that prohibit lobbying, and regulations, or contact David Patte at 503/231-2264.

David Patte is a congressional affairs specialist in External Affairs.

Lobbying Quiz

Here's a chance to test your skill in determining what lobbying is — and isn't.

Q. Your congressional aide asks if you'd be willing to hand out bumper stickers supporting his or her boss at your station's festival exhibit. Can you do this?

A. No. An employee may not participate in political activity while on duty, while wearing a Service uniform, badge, or insignia, while using a government vehicle, or while on government property.

Q. You need to raise money for a new viewing platform. Can you make a funding appeal or presentation to the public?

A. Anti-lobbying rules apply if you are seeking to increase your station's appropriation/budget. But the Service has the authority to seek grants and donations from *non-federal sources* or from other *federal funds already appropriated*. These funds can be provided through the Contributed Funds account, or through Reimbursable Accounts (check with Budget and Finance for more information). Wish lists can be shared with the public, but fundraising for non-federal sources can best be handled by "Friends" groups or other conservation entities.

Q. A local conservation organization asks if you'd like to insert an article in their newsletter asking their members to write letters to elected officials to support federal funding for your new viewing platform. Can you do this?

A. No. The conservation organization can obtain the needed information from you, but they should make the fundraising appeal.

Q. Can representatives of a non-profit organization ask your Member of Congress to support their request regarding the Land and Water Conservation Fund budget?

A. Most non-profit organizations have charters that provide some latitude for lobbying (there are limits, such as five percent of total operating expenses, etc.). Your non-profit group should know this or can check with the Internal Revenue Service regarding activities that would jeopardize its non-profit status.

Upcoming Events

Morro Bay Winter Bird Festival

When: January 18-21
Where: The Inn at Morro Bay, CA
Contact:
Chamber of Commerce
800/231-0592
www.morrobay.net/birds

Snow Goose Festival

When: January 19-20
Where:
Butte County, CA
Contact:
800852-8570
www.chicochamber.com

San Diego Bird Festival

When: February 7-10
Where: San Diego, CA
Contact:
Imperial Beach Chamber of Commerce
619/429-5378
www.flitetours.com/festival.htm

Klamath Basin Bald Eagle Conference/ Festival

When: February 15-17
Where:
Klamath Falls, OR
Contact:
800/445-6728
www.eaglecon.org

Gateway Center Wins Awards

Respected architects from Boston, Los Angeles, and Minneapolis selected the Service's Gateway Center project at Steigerwald Lake NWR as the recipient of two awards from the American Institute of Architects (AIA) Portland Chapter.

An important selection criteria for the awards was how well a project responded to its environment. The Gateway Center won an award in the Unbuilt (designed but not yet completed) Category. It was also one of two People's Choice winners, selected by the public from 70 entries.

The project, designed by Fletcher, Farr and Ayote Architects, is a combined gateway facility for the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area and administrative headquarters for the three gorge refuges. It consists of an information kiosk with public restrooms, headquarters building with an interpretive gallery, entry walk, elevated overlook with skybridge, entry road, parking, native landscaping, interpretive trail, and created wetlands.

The building incorporates many state-of-the-art energy conservation features and uses recycled materials, native plants, a constructed berm to maintain building temperatures, a bioswale to remove pollutants from parking lot runoff, and more. For information, contact Mari Jilbert 503/231-6144.

Turnbull NWR Brochure a Winner

The National Association for Interpretation (NAI) 2001 Workshop recognized Glenda Franich, visual information specialist at EPIC, for developing Turnbull NWR's new general brochure.

The publication received a second place award in the Site Specific Publications Category for Media Awards at NAI's annual November meeting in Des Moines, Iowa.

Design, editorial content, visual interest, photographic quality, and readability of maps and graphics were among the elements considered during judging.

Franich says she submitted the entry, hoping to receive recognition for the quality interpretive work produced by the Service.

"Having our work reviewed by a group of peers and selected for this award from a large number of entries was truly gratifying," she said.

The winning publication is only one of the many high quality interpretive projects designed and produced by the EPIC team.

An Idea to Steal

Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge in Region 6 produced a Centennial banner suitable for placement on light poles along the streets of Brigham City, Utah.

One side of the banner promotes the Centennial; the other side promotes Bear River NWR.

The colorful banners are 29 by 60 inches. They cost less than $75 each because the refuge ordered nearly 50 of them. For more information contact Vickie Hirschboeck or Karen Lindsey at 435/723-5887.

Centennial Handbook

Did your field station receive "A How-to Handbook to Support the National Wildlife Refuge System's Centennial?"

The handbook provides ideas for events, tips for writing a news release or a proclamation, information on time capsule burial, messages to use in speeches, and more.

Check it and other tips at **http://sii.fws.gov/r1/Centennial/**, or contact Susan Saul at 503/872-2728.

Access Nature

Looking for some exciting new environmental materials and methods? The National Wildlife Federation's (NWF) new ACCESS NATURE curriculum for students from kindergarten through eighth grade may be just the ticket.

The guide includes 60 hours of inclusive lessons around the theme of habitat. The lessons are aligned with the National Science Education Standards and are suitable for children with or without disabilities.

Purchase the guide for $39.95 from NWF, P.O. Box 975, Newark, NY 14513-3092, 716/461-4092. For more information contact Susan Saul, who attended a workshop about the product, at 503/872-2728.

EA PERSPECTIVE

Let Truth Be Your Compass

How to navigate through congressional responses

By Rick Coleman

It was a dark and stormy night. The pilot of the small plane was fighting hard to keep the plane on a steady path through a mountainous region.

He looked down at his flight instruments and noticed his altimeter wasn't working. He tapped this vital instrument and implored, "Altimeter, altimeter, what is my altitude?"

The instrument replied, "What do you want it to be?"

The pilot pondered a moment, then answered, "Just the truth."

We all receive queries from members of Congress. Often, responding to an elected official can feel like flying a perilous course with instruments that keep us guessing. What should we say? Who should we try to please? How far do we go with our answers?

When crafting our responses, we need only remember our imaginary pilot who knew that the truth, not what he might like to hear, would get him out of his predicament.

Public participation is an important part of our Constitutional democracy. For various reasons, a person may contact his or her congressional representative or senator regarding a Fish and Wildlife Service issue.

We hear about it when we receive a call or letter from that Member's office, asking for us to supply them with information about the topic or requesting that we respond directly to the constituent. Responding to these requests, especially in writing, can be imposing. They come with response deadlines and lots of requirements for review and surname. All of this can make it challenging to know what we should say.

We should not assume that the elected official has forwarded a letter or otherwise contacted us out of agreement with the constituent's point of view. He or she probably believes that the query simply merits a reply.

If you base your response upon an assumed concurrence, you may filter or slant it and mistakenly misrepresent what is really going on. This can get you in trouble later on, when information you've omitted comes to light.

When responding to requests for information from members of Congress, take a cue from the pilot who didn't ponder long about what was needed: Just supply the unvarnished truth. Make your response clear, complete, credible, and prompt. Back your reasons up with scientific background and/or pertinent policies or statutes. Write it so your neighbor can understand it. Get on it quickly.

And if it's a formal written response, get it done and through the surname process so it is still considered timely when received.

These interactions are really measures of good government in action. Do your part to make sure the process works.

Rick Coleman is assistant regional director for External Affairs.

"Make congressional communications clear, concise, credible, and prompt."

Salmon Festival…

Continued from Page 1

have responded with great interest and support for the goals and objectives of the Salmon Festival. They have sent staff representatives when they are unable to attend themselves.

The gathering opens doors for elected officials and their staffs to see constituents, share concerns and ideas with special interest groups, meet natural resource agency decision makers, and spend time learning.

These men and women find a chance to explore nature by getting "back to basics." They put on a pair of waders and look for bugs in the creek, view salmon spawning in natural habitat, go on a riparian ramble along the creek, or identify native fish species.

So often our interactions with elected officials revolve around controversies. Events like the Salmon Festival help "right the balance,"offering a chance for them to see positive FWS programs in action and the respect they engender within the community.

Corky Broaddus is a supervisory information and education specialist at Leavenworth NFH.

CENTENNIAL CORNER

Places of Refuge for All Americans

Solace is right in everyone's backyard

By Susan Saul

"We have real opportunities to make the Refuge System relevant to all Americans."

Why should people be interested in the centennial of the National Wildlife Refuge System?

Because, according to Johnson Design Group, the public relations firm hired to help us develop outreach products for the centennial, refuges are more important than ever in this time of terrorism.

Focus groups interviewed by Johnson Design Group associated national wildlife refuges with natural beauty and calm for reflection, regaining peace in the face of tragedy, and renewing emotional strength.

As a result, Johnson Design Group is recommending that we add a new slogan to our centennial materials: "Places of refuge for all Americans."

People can find inspiration and patriotic significance in the conservation history of the Refuge System.

Our heroes exhibited courage and determination and overcame seemingly insurmountable hurdles to get those first small bird reserves established.

They protected and nurtured those first refuges and stood steadfast against the exploiters.

Succeeding generations of heroes helped build the scattered refuges into the national system of lands and waters that we know today.

People can find inspiration and renewal in the resilience of nature. Many of our refuges demonstrate the healing effects of habitat restoration as our managers, biologists, fire specialists, and maintenance crews turn degraded landscapes into oases of wildlife.

The seasonal cycles of nature can help people move forward as they watch life go on in the world around them.

People can find solace and recovery in recreational activities like fishing, photography and wildlife observation.

Special events, such as nature festivals, show that we have not forgotten how to laugh and have fun.

We have real opportunities to make the Refuge System relevant to all Americans. We offer what many people are seeking in the aftermath of crisis, and our refuges are right in their backyards. O

Susan Saul is an outreach specialist in External Affairs.

TRAININGS & WORKSHOPS

Planning Interpretive Panels and Wayside Exhibits

This course helps participants design tools to spark visitor interest, encourage compliance with site rules, and meet other objectives. Participants bring and work on their own current interpretive panel projects or ideas. Covers everything from effective writing to design and fabrication.

When: 1/14-1/17, 2002
Where: Shepherdstown, WV
Contact: Sharon Howard 304/876-7494

Human Dimensions of Wildlife

In partnership with Responsive Management and the International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, NCTC introduces "Human Dimensions of Wildlife." Instructor Mark Duda, well-known authority in this area, will discuss public attitudes and provide helpful planning tips.

When: 2/19-2/22, 2002, register by 12/26/01
Where: Shepherdstown, WV
Contact: Sharon Howard 304/876-7494

Grant Writing for Conservation

This course interweaves the grant proposal writing process with how to seek alternative funding sources and cultivate relationships with potential funding partners. Come home with lots of tips and useful material.

When: 2/26-2/28, 2002 register by 1/7/02
Where: Shepherdstown, WV
Contact: Ora Dixon 304/876-7314.

Weed-Eaters in Washington

National Invasive Weeds Awareness Week sponsored by the Invasive Weeds Awareness Coalition provides venues to raise the awareness of and educate both the public and Congress on the successes and current needs in the fight against noxious and invasive weeds. Visit the web site **http://www.nawma.org/niwaw.htm** to get meeting and event details.

When: 2/25-3/1, 2002
Where: Washington, D.C.
Contact: Mike Ielmini 703/358-2340

THE MEDIA CORNER

Getting into the Media

Journalists' meeting offers chance for training and outreach

By Phil Carroll

Five government spies? Nah, we were just five public affairs folks. We were, however, sitting in plain clothes in a session led and attended by 50 or 60 of the premier environmental reporters in the nation.

One of the discussion leaders spits out a comment that gets all five of us vibrating in our seats: "No federal agency *ever* enforces environmental laws any more."

One of our number is the first to get her hand in the air and be recognized.

"You must be forgetting about the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service," she says. "We have a whole law enforcement branch, with some of the most dedicated and effective law enforcement agents in the world. In fact, there are tons of stories about their activities just waiting for you folks to present them to the public."

The panelist at this point hangs his head and says that his first statement in no way applied to this agency and he should have remembered us and a couple others before making such a broad statement. In the rest of the room, old timers are nodding thoughtfully and newcomers are soaking it all up.

How do you put a price tag on the value of that kind of outreach, applied to such a crucial audience? After the session all five of us followed up with personal conversations, business cards, and story ideas.

This took place at the 11th annual conference of the Society of Environmental Journalists (SEJ), held in Portland this year. There are few such important venues that government public affairs, information and education, and outreach specialists can readily access.

The whole week was loaded with opportunities! For example, I was able to introduce a colleague to a reporter I have known for quite some time. She has been a valuable source for him on an ongoing controversial story, but only by telephone.

Because they finally got to meet in person, in a non-deadline situation, she was able to casually chat about a few things that would have been hard to bring up in an interview. The result? Two days later another good story further clarified a tough, complex issue.

It's easy to think of reporters and editors as simply a conduit for the information that we need to reach our audiences; however, these people are also an audience in their own right, and need to be treated as one. The SEJ's regional and national conferences are one of the very best open doors we can use to contact and get to know this audience.

Two of the sessions I attended this year were: "*How to make environmental stories resonate* (We'll look at how to succeed in fusing cutting-edge reporting with style and how best to convey news laden with statistics and uncertainty.)"; and "*Selling the story with science* (Tired of the "he-said, she-said" back and forth between environmentalists and industry? If so, chances are your editors and readers have also grown weary of that old formula.)."

Note that this last one was sponsored by the National Association of Science Writers. How many of us are tapped into this group?

Take this old timer's advice and look into the SEJ. Next year's annual conference will be in Baltimore.

Their website (**http://www.sej.org**) offers information about national and regional conferences, tips on hot environmental news topics, examples of good environmental reporting, and more. For more information contact Joan Jewett at 503/231-6120.

Phil Carroll is a supervisory education and information specialist at the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Office.

"These people are also an audience in their own right."

Photos by: USFWS photo

Phil Carroll being interviewed — and building bridges — with the news media.

"Blue Goose Sightings"

Six foot tall bird spotted at refuge events

By Art Shine

A rare bird has been turning up around the Pacific Region this fall. Visitors to McNary, Willapa, Ridgefield, and San Luis national wildlife refuges have reported sightings of a six foot tall blue goose.

More than 500 visitors saw the mascot at McNary NWR. Children were especially excited to shake the goose's "wing" and walk with it to the different refuge demonstrations. Adults enjoyed getting their picture taken with it.

The blue goose showed up for a presentation for 120 fourth graders. The kids loved the mascot and parents loved taking pictures of their children with the mascot.

It also flew into Ridgefield for Bird Fest 2001 during Refuge Week, where many visitors reported seeing and photographing it.

You can now borrow one of two blue goose costumes for events and outreach programs. The professional quality costume comes with detailed guidelines for effectively using it.

The costume "package" also includes cards entitled "Why a Blue Goose?" that can be distributed to the public to explain why the blue goose is the symbol of the National Wildlife Refuge System.

Think about borrowing the blue goose costume for spring festivals, parades, and other outreach events. Make your reservations early, since this rare bird is bound to be in demand.

Photos by: USFWS photo

Art Shine, left, "handles" mascot during a Kodak moment.

To make arrangements to borrow a costume, contact John Fulton, San Luis NWRC, at 209/826-3508 or John Gahr, Mid-Columbia River NWRC, at 509/545-8588.

Art Shine is an outdoor recreation planner at Willapa National Wildlife Refuge.

Mascot Lessons

Peter Strobie, a professional mascot at the Kalamazoo Nature Center, makes the following suggestions for using the blue goose costume:

- Work with a spotter or handler. It is very difficult to see or speak through the headpiece.
  A second person must guide the mascot and speak for it. The second person should be in uniform to reinforce the connection between the Blue Goose and the Refuge System.
- Have several costume wearers on hand. It is very hot inside, even with ice pillows; recommended wearing time is 20 to 40 minutes maximum.
- Remember the four "E's" of being a mascot:
  Entrance — Make your mark with a big entrance. Grab the audience's attention.
  Exaggeration — Double or even triple the gestures you would normally make so the costume doesn't hide your movements. Use your whole body since the audience can't see your facial expressions.
  Emotion — Practice a number of emotions (happy, sad, angry, excited) in front of a mirror.
  Energy — Select people to wear the costume who can perform and keep their energy high.

California Duck Days

When: February 16-17
Where: Davis, CA
Contact:
530/758-1286
www.duckdays.org

Salton Sea International Bird Festival

When: February 15-18
Where: Holtville, CA
Contact:
760/344-5FLY
www.imperialcounty.com/birdfest

National Wildlife Refuge System Birthday

When: March 14
Where: Nationwide
Regional Contact:
Susan Saul
503/872-2728

Wild on Wetlands

When: March 9-10
Where: Los Banos, CA
Contact: John Fulton
209/826-3508 or
800/336-6354

Aleutian Goose Festival

When: March 22-25
Where:
Crescent City, CA
Contact:
800/343-8300
707/465-0888
www.redwoodlink.com/soar/

ENTIRELY EPIC

HELP! Is on the Way

EPIC offering new products and streamlined services

By Jean Harrison

"We really like the work EPIC does, but it takes so long to get a product."

That was what I heard most when I interviewed more than 35 people throughout the Pacific Region. My first task after returning "home" to the Service in June to take the helm at EPIC was to learn about what people need and expect from our office. I asked each participant three questions: What works about EPIC? What doesn't work? And what, if any, changes should EPIC make to better serve its customers?

I received many helpful comments, good ideas, and strong support for EPIC's work.

This feedback helped shape the agenda for a subsequent EPIC brainstorming meeting.

The outcome of that meeting was a plan that includes numerous products and changes in how we work. The plan will help us better focus our time and give you more options to get the products and services you need.

One product we will create for our customers is a CD with the FWS Publications Graphics Standards, and the standard fonts, logos, and templates (at last!) of publications, such as wildlife lists, hunt tear sheets, and fact sheets.

The CD will also include examples of these types of publications, guidelines to help you develop them, and some clip art. We'll include forms you'll need, as well as instructions and information about the Government Printing Office (GPO).

If your station has the capability to create a layout for a bird list, for example, you will be able to send us your hard copy or electronic file and the necessary forms, we'll give it a final review, and send it off to GPO. Of course, EPIC will still create these products if your station needs assistance.

We will also update the EPIC HELP! Book, and include more information about digital photos, electronic file formats, and other topics. We'll post the book on the *sii* site and also make it available on CD.

The EPIC team members working on this project will soon be contacting people in the field for input about the type of information desired. Or, get the jump on us and email your suggestions to Glenda Franich. Label your email "HELP book," please.

Our goal is to get these products to you at the end of fiscal year 2002.

If you have other ideas, I hope you'll feel free to contact me at 503/872-2700. We're anxious to improve the ways we can assist you, help you complete important products, and use contemporary publication and facility designs to "fulfill our promises" regarding visitor services.

Jean Harrison is the division chief of EPIC.

"Our goal is to get these products to you at the end of fiscal year 2002."

RESOURCES: Displays, Exhibits, and Publications

Fish and Wildlife Laws

The Office of Congressional and Legislative Affairs in the Washington Office maintains the Digest of Federal Resource Laws online at **http://laws.fws.gov/**. It is a comprehensive listing and description of federal authorities under which the Fish and Wildlife Service functions, including administrative laws, treaties, executive orders, interstate compacts, and memoranda of agreement.

Thomas

Check the Thomas internet site, which is "*In the spirit of Thomas Jefferson, a service of The Library of Congress,*" at **http://thomas.loc.gov**. The site includes congressional calendars, search capabilities and links for pending and enacted legislation, and the Congressional Record.

Federal Register

Go to **http://www.gpo.gov/** and scroll down to the Federal Register "Quick Link."

Congress

The congressional websites at **www.house.gov** and **www.senate.gov** provide useful links to congressional calendars, member sites, committee and subcommittee sites, hearing transcripts, etc.

Congressional Directories

External Affairs sent copies of the Congressional Directory to all project leaders. It provides summary level information about every member of Congress. Call David Patte at 503/ 231-2264 if you need more copies. More detailed information on staff duties and district offices is found in the *Congressional Yellow Book*. Call David Patte at 503/231-2264 for help; the *Yellow Book* subscription is expensive.

Show Them…

Continued from Page 1

"customized" full-day field tours to our legislators.

The Oregon office conducted a series of tours that would introduce the delegations to Kemper, as well as a variety of locations, such as Trapper Creek, Wickiup Dam, Tualatin River National Wildlife Refuge and the FWS Forensics Laboratory in Ashland.

The Idaho office took delegations on tours of Partners for Fish and Wildlife private lands projects near Boise, Bear Lake National Wildlife Refuge, and Deer Flat National Wildlife Refuge, where they saw bald eagle nesting sites.

Both tours allowed participants to informally discuss a wide range of topics. There was positive dialogue about many issues, such as gray wolf dispersal and management, stream channel restoration, fuel management and forest health, selenium contamination, and refuge issues.

Much can be said for the benefits of working with staffers outside of the traditional suit and tie environment. Interpersonal relationships were strengthened while we baked in the sun, were buffeted by the wind, bounced along rugged backroads, and enjoyed a lunch of turkey sandwiches.

The staffers were quick to recognize the value of the tours and anxious to be included in future outings.

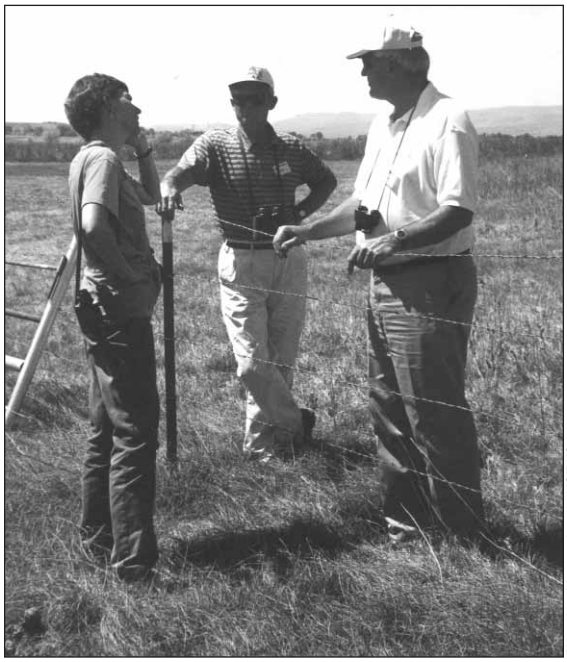


Photo by: Meggan Laxalt, USFWS

Tour offers chance for Partners Program staff and landowners to visit.

One staffer sent a letter applauding the tour she took, expressing thanks for the chance to become better acquainted with Service issues and contacts.

From our perspective, the benefits were immediate and have continued, just as we hoped.

If you'd like to conduct a tour, here are some tips:

- Contact staffs early. Calendars are often booked months in advance.
- Avoid scheduling tours during recesses, a time when officials and their staffs usually tour their states.
- Follow up and confirm attendance. Ask if anyone has special needs (or food preferences).
- Consider travel distances and weather.
- Pay attention to details! Bring binoculars, extra jackets, food, and drinking water.
- Have competent, personable, and articulate FWS staff available to conduct the tours and answer questions.
- Prepare briefing books. Provide one for each staffer, and get copies to the staffers who cannot attend.
- Plan your itineraries carefully and coordinate the timing if multiple stops are included.
- Don't forget a camera. Send photos to the staffers after the tours and keep them on file for other uses.
- Include private landowners and Partners groups that are supportive of the Service and our mission.
- Take comfortable vehicles. It is better if everyone can ride together so all participants can hear the conversation.
- Don't be afraid to laugh and have a good time!
- Send thank-you letters.

If you have questions please don't hesitate to call Barbara Todd Bassler at 503/231-6179 and Meggan Laxalt at 208/378-5243. O

Barbara Todd Bassler is an information and education specialist at the Oregon State Fish and Wildlife Office. Meggan Laxalt is an information and education specialist at the Snake River Field Office.

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