

## U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Media Services Style Guide

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**Abbreviations and Acronyms:** Avoid abbreviations. If possible, avoid acronyms. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers can properly be cited as "the Corps" on second reference. Acronyms for other Federal agencies are acceptable on second reference to avoid confusion or needless length. The National Marine Fisheries Service, for example, can be cited as "NMFS" on second reference.

**Act:** "Act" is always capitalized when it is part of the name of a piece of proposed or final legislation, such as the Endangered Species Act.

**Administration:** Capitalize "Administration" when used in conjunction with the name of a President, such as the Clinton Administration.

**Ages:** Use figures always.

**A.M./P.M.:** Lowercase.

**Animal Names:** lowercase, with the exception of animals whose name includes a proper name such as the Mexican wolf. It is not necessary to include Latin names in press releases unless the species in question has no common name or shares a common name with another species. In those cases, capitalize the first word of the Latin name. Example: common pigeon (*Columba livia*). If you discuss more than one species of the same genus in text, cite the full scientific name for the first and abbreviate the genus for subsequent species or subspecies. Example: gray wolf (*Canis lupus*), Mexican wolf (*C. lupus baileyi*), red wolf (*C. rufus*). It is also preferable to italicize the scientific name (or underline if you can't italicize).

**Apostrophe:** Do not use an apostrophe after a date, such as the Roaring 20s. Add only an apostrophe after a plural noun ending in "s." Use an 's for singular nouns ending in s, unless the noun is a proper name or the next word begins with an s.

**Awards and Honors:** Capitalize the full name of an award, such as the Department of the Interior's Conservation Service Award.

**Bird watching:** Is two words.

**Capitalization:** Capitalize the primary words of all publication and video titles, such as Endangered and Threatened Species Recovery Program - 1992. Capitalize "river," "ocean," "sea," "lake," "mount," etc. when they appear as part of a proper name. Example: Mississippi River, Pacific Ocean, Mount Washington. Lower-case when citing more than one. Example: Mississippi and Missouri rivers, Atlantic and Pacific oceans, mounts Washington and Graylock. Capitalize "national wildlife refuge" when part of a proper name (Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge) or when referring to the entire system of

refuges (National Wildlife Refuge System). Lower-case all other times. Example: at a national wildlife refuge, near the refuge, national wildlife refuges are . . .

**Century:** Lowercase, the 20th century.

**Coast:** Capitalize when it refers to a region, such as the East Coast. Lowercase when it refers to a smaller area, such as the Maryland coast.

**Comma:** Do not use a comma preceding the "and" designating the end of a series. For example: The Endangered Species Act protects black-footed ferrets, Florida scrub jays and the four-petal pawpaw.

**Committee:** Capitalize when it is part of a formal name, such as the House Resources Committee. Do not abbreviate.

**Compound Sentences:** Use a semicolon to separate clauses containing clauses, like this: Reptiles, amphibians and predatory mammals swallow their prey whole or in large pieces, bones included; waterfowl usually take shellfish whole.

**Court Names:** Capitalize the full and proper names at all levels, such as the 9th U. S. District Court.

**Data:** "Data" is a plural noun.

**Dates:** Do use an apostrophe when leaving out part of a date. Example: the 1920s/the Roaring '20s.

**Datelines:** Do not use datelines in Service press releases.

**Department:** The proper reference is the U.S. Department of the Interior. It is Interior or the Department when standing alone.

**Directions:** Directions are not capitalized in cases such as "Foggy Bottom Metro Station is west of the Department of the Interior." Regions are capitalized, such as "The South lost the Civil War."

**Director:** Capitalize the job title when it appears either before or after the Director's full name. Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Jamie Rappaport Clark is the preferred reference.

**Federal:** It is the Federal government in all references.

**Fiscal year:** It is fiscal year, but FY 99.

**Fractions:** Spell out fractions, using hyphens between words like this: one- fifth.

**Governor:** Capitalize and abbreviate as Gov. when it precedes a name, but capitalize and spell out Governor when the reference precedes a quote. Lowercase and spell out in all other uses.

**Grand jury:** lowercase. A single jurisdiction may have several grand juries.

**Great Lakes or Great Plains:** Capitalize in all cases. On second reference they may be cited as the Lakes or the Plains.

**Gulf Coast:** Capitalize when referring to the region surrounding the Gulf of Mexico.

**Handicapped:** Avoid the use of this word. Use disabled instead.

**Hawaii:** Do not abbreviate.

**Highway names:** Capitalize like this: U.S. Highway, U.S. Route, State Route, Interstate.

**Holidays:** Capitalize legal holidays and annual religious observances, such as Independence Day, Hanukkah.

**Idaho:** Do not abbreviate.

**Iowa:** Do not abbreviate.

**Legislative:** Capitalize and abbreviate as Rep., Reps., Sen. or Sens. when it precedes a name or group of names, but capitalize and spell out Representative or Senator when the reference precedes a quote. Lowercase and spell out in all other uses. Add U.S. or State before the title if needed to clarify relationships.

**Magazine and Newspaper names:** Capitalize just as they do on their mastheads. It is, for example, The New York Times.

**Maine:** Do not abbreviate.

**Man/Women:** AP suggests that humanity, a person, or an individual may be a better substitute for this term to avoid gender-specific writing.

**Million:** Use Arabic numerals with million or billion. Do not mix billion and million, or million and thousand, in the same figure. Use decimal points instead. However, do not go beyond two decimal points. It is \$1.56 billion, not \$1.562 billion.

**Months:** Capitalize the name of months in all uses.

**Non-Native species:** NOT nonnative species.

**Numerals:** Use Arabic numerals unless Roman numerals are specifically called for, such as World War II. Unless it represents a calendar year, spell out numerals at the beginning of a sentence. Spell out numerals one through nine, unless dealing with serial numbers, for example Genesis 1:1; or units of measurement or time, such as 6 feet, \$3, 5 hours, 2-year-old. Fractions standing alone or followed by "of" are spelled out.

**Party Affiliation:** Party affiliation of elected or appointed officials is not to be indicated in any press release, bulletin, fact sheet, biologue or other Service publication.

**Percent:** One word.

**Percentages:** Use Arabic numerals in all cases. For amounts less than 1 percent, precede the decimal point with a 0, as in 0.6 percent. Repeat the percent sign for each individual figure.

**Plant names:** lowercase, with the exception of plants whose name includes a proper name such as the Ash Meadows milk vetch. It is not necessary to include Latin names in press releases unless the species in question has no common name or shares a common name with another species. In that case, capitalize the first word of the Latin name. Example: hairy rattleweed (*Baptista arachnifera*). If you discuss more than one species of the same genus in text, cite the full scientific name for the first and abbreviate the genus for subsequent species or subspecies. Example: MacDonald's rock-cress (*Arabis mcdonaldiana*), shale barren rock-cress (*A. Serotina*). It is also preferable to italicize the scientific name (or underline if you can't italicize).

**P.M./A.M.:** Lowercase.

**President:** Unless referring to the President of the U.S., capitalize only as a title before one or more names.

**Quotations:** Commas and periods always appear inside quotation marks. Other punctuation may be either inside or outside quotation marks, depending on the meaning being conveyed.

**Semicolon:** Use a semicolon to separate clauses containing clauses, like this: Reptiles, amphibians and predatory mammals swallow their prey whole or in large pieces, bones included; waterfowl usually take shellfish whole.

**Species:** Is both singular and plural. Use singular and plural pronouns and verbs depending on the meaning being conveyed.

**State:** Capitalize in all "state of" constructions, the State of Nevada or the California Supreme Court. Lower-case the word "state" when it stands alone. Example: the State of Maryland/Maryland State Department of Natural Resources/in the state. Kentucky, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania and Virginia are technically commonwealths. They should

be cited as such in cases involving specific legal actions; The Commonwealth of Virginia sued the Fish and Wildlife Service. Do not abbreviate state names in any written material.

**Telephone numbers:** Use figures. Parentheses around the area code are desirable, but not necessary.

**Temperatures:** Use figures, but spell out "zero." Use the word "minus" to indicate temperatures below zero. Remember, temperatures rise or fall, they do not get warmer or colder.

**Time:** Use figures, but spell out noon and midnight to avoid confusion. Use a colon to separate hours and minutes.

**Toward:** NOT towards

**U.N. and U.S.:** Acceptable in all references with these abbreviations.

**U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service:** In all text documents, use the agency's full name on first reference: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. An ampersand (&) instead of a spelled-out "and" is used only in graphic elements such as the logo or the name bar. On second reference, the agency should be referred to as the Service. Acronyms for other Federal Agencies are acceptable on second reference to avoid confusion or needless length, the National Marine Fisheries Service, for example, can be cited as NMFS on second reference.

**Wetlands:** Wetlands is singular when used as an adjective and plural when used as a noun. Examples: "The policy will promote protection of wetlands," but "Wetland habitat is disappearing at an alarming rate."

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## **PRESS RELEASE PROCEDURES**

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The following guidelines will help expedite the preparation and surnaming of draft press releases. Before you send them to be put on redhead, please:

- Put your name, phone number, and, if desired, e-mail address, flush right above the title.
- Do not put on a specific date but do inform the preparer if you need the release by a particular date.
- Put the title in all caps, underline, and bold.
- Double-space the text.
- Use the "Tab" key to indent paragraphs.
- Let preparer attach stock close.

Once a press release is on redhead, please:

- When reviewers make changes, give them to the preparer to make and to print a new redhead. Do not ask for a new redhead each time a reviewer (or author) changes one word.
- Let the preparer sweat the surnaming.
- The surnaming route is: author; affected division; Chief, Media Services; Chief, Public Affairs; Deputy, External Affairs; appropriate AD; AD-External Affairs. If the release includes quotes from the Director or Deputy Director, add the Director's office to the surname list. If the release does not include quotes from the Director or Deputy Director but is about a subject that is of particular concern to the Director's office (such as endangered species and law enforcement), also include that office to the review. If the release includes quotes from the Secretary, surnaming includes the Director's office, the Assistant Secretary's office, and the Secretary's office.
- As far as is possible, give the preparers enough time to prepare the redhead and get it through surnaming, finalizing, printing, and distribution.
- Tell the preparer up front if you're going to need extra copies, for instance for a press conference or special event, and when those copies are needed.