Appendix A-2
National Outreach Strategy

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

National Outreach Strategy:

A Master Plan for Communicating in the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

U.S.
FISH & WILDLIFE
SERVICE

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
Washington, D.C. 20240

In Reply Refer To:
FWS/PA

AUG - 8 1997

Memorandum

To: Service Employees

From: Director

Subject: National Outreach Strategy

Communication is essential to the Fish and Wildlife Service's resource mission. Good communication builds understanding and helps the public make informed decisions about the future of fish and wildlife resources.

Over the past several years, it became clear to the Directorate that a sharper focus is needed for the Service's "outreach" efforts. This decision arose out of a growing awareness that the Service expends significant resources on "outreach," but that we are not presenting the public with a unified understanding of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's conservation mission.

To strengthen and focus the Service's communication efforts, the Directorate has approved the National Outreach Strategy. The Strategy offers guidance to help clarify and unify our message and to make sure we are talking -- and listening -- to the audiences who will have the greatest influence on the future of fish and wildlife resources. It also provides specific guidance to help you prepare outreach plans now required for endangered species listings and all other significant Service actions.

The goals of the National Outreach Strategy are simple: to ensure that we are building relationships with partners and decisionmakers; to provide timely, accurate information about our decisions to concerned citizens; and to provide clear messages about how fish and wildlife conservation affects the quality of life for all Americans. The Strategy is also aimed at ensuring that we all communicate about the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service when we conduct "outreach" for our individual programs and field stations.

By implementing the National Outreach Strategy, we will make more effective use of the time and money we devote to communication. Ultimately, the relationships we build and the public understanding we gain will help ensure a more secure future for America's fish and wildlife resources.

I hope each of you will read this document and begin to apply it in your daily work. The Service Directorate will continue to take the actions required to implement the National Outreach Strategy.

Executive Summary

This report describes a national communications strategy for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

A *more unified, strategic communications program* will help the Service accomplish its conservation mission for fish and wildlife. This strategy recommends actions that will make communications an integral part of our natural resource management program.

The Service needs to *focus its message* so that the agency speaks with one voice across the country. Employees can then build upon each other's communications efforts. The strategy recommends three basic messages that can be used to explain why the Service's work is important to the American people.

For any communications progam to work, the Service must be perceived as a *credible source* of information, and its employees must be trusted as dedicated professionals who are *responsive to the public.* Building and maintaining this public trust should be an integral part of the Service's outreach program.

To achieve this, the strategy recommends that Service outreach efforts focus on building *strong relationships with key audiences at the local, regional, and national level.* It recommends that the Service prepare and carry out *outreach plans* for major decisions and announcements to make sure that the agency's message is clear and that concerned people are notified in a timely way.

The strategy recommends that the Service strengthen its communications program by building a stronger corps of *communications professionals* at key locations. It also recommends establishing a position for a National Outreach Coordinator at the Washington Office level to focus on building new partnerships and a more integrated Service outreach effort.

The strategy recommends that the Service continue its effort to strengthen its "corporate identity" by implementing the *uniform design standards* for publications and reviewing standards for uniforms and vehicles. It recommends *reviewing existing publications, audiovisuals, and exhibits* to determine the need for new or updated materials that can be used Servicewide. It also recommends making *better use of special events* to support specific messages, and using environmental education programs to support Service outreach goals.

Introduction: Using Communications to Carry Out Our Mission

As we approach the 21st century, the future of America's fish and wildlife is at a crossroads. Wildlife habitat continues to vanish in the face of development pressure, while our growing urban population has less direct connection with fish and wildlife than any previous generation. The public often responds emotionally to wildlife management and conservation issues. Professional fish and wildlife managers face new challenges that demand new approaches to the way we do business.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is America's voice for wildlife. It is our job to speak up for the wild creatures that cannot speak for themselves. To be effective, we must do so in a way that engenders public understanding and support.

Although the Service must manage many controversial issues, it also enjoys significant strengths: a dedicated workforce, and strong public interest in fish and wildlife.

To meet Service challenges and take advantage of its strengths, this plan recommends a more unified and strategic communications program that will help the Service carry out its resource conservation mission.

A great deal of effective and valuable outreach is already occurring within the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Many employees are already implementing the actions recommended in this plan. There are still many instances, however, when communications needs are not "built in" to planning for Service resource decisions.

In the past the Service has not devoted enough resources to communications to match the ability of our activities to generate controversy. And because the Service has such diverse responsibilities, existing outreach resources have been spread thin. Most outreach efforts have been conducted on an ad hoc basis to meet the needs of individual field stations, regions, or programs. While this has resulted in favorable results in some individual instances, its overall effect has been a "scattershot" approach to communications.

Former Director Mollie Beattie noted that this diversified, decentralized approach to outreach was not meeting critical Servicewide information needs during 1990's, and was unlikely to serve the agency or the public well in the 21st century.

"It's not a question of whether we're doing things right," she said, "but whether we are doing the right things."

Individual regions, field stations, and programs do have specific communication needs. The National Outreach Strategy is not intended to supplant these efforts, nor can any central strategy dictate the details of all regional, field, or program communication efforts. Rather, the National Outreach Strategy is intended to provide guidance and focus for Service communication efforts. Its goal is to make sure we make the most effective use of our time and resources by focusing our message into something people can easily understand, and making sure we deliver that message to concerned people in a timely way.

The success of the National Outreach Strategy will depend on an effective *internal* communication program so that employees will understand and be able to carry out the plan. This internal component must include providing employees with factual information about Service policy and activities on major issues, so that even those who are not directly involved will be informed enough to explain issues to the public.

Goal

The goal of the National Outreach Strategy is to help U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service employees communicate more effectively, in order to improve the agency's ability to carry out its fish and wildlife conservation mission.

Through the National Outreach Strategy, the Service will:

- Define clear, consistent messages;
- Improve the consistency and timeliness of the information the Service provides to decisionmakers, community leaders, and the public;
- Improve relationships with key audiences and recognize the importance of the public as a participant in natural resource management;
- Unify employees to work toward common goals, while respecting the diversity of their responsibilities;
- Increase public awareness about what the Service does and how its conservation activities contribute to values that are important to the American people.

Effectively implemented, the National Outreach Strategy will:

- Improve service to the public;
- Strengthen the credibility and stature of the Service;
- Make it easier for employees to carry out their natural resource management responsibilities;
- Improve support for the agency's resource mission; and
- Build new partnerships.

What is "Outreach"?

"Outreach" in the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has become a generic term that means different things to different people.

Several years ago, a Service "white paper" defined "outreach" as "any effort designed to communicate information to, impart knowledge to, promote involvement by, or create behavioral change in the public regarding fish and wildlife resource issues."

This definition is strong in most respects, but leaves out the concept that effective communication is two-way: it involves listening, seeking out the views of stakeholders, noting the concerns of others, and changing Service actions when appropriate.

Thus, this strategy will adopt a version of the outreach definition used by Region 7:

Outreach is two-way communication between the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the public to establish mutual understanding, promote involvement, and influence attitudes and actions, with the goal of improving joint stewardship of our natural resources.

Outreach includes but is not limited to the following:

- Congressional relations
- Corporate relations
- News media relations
- Relations with constituent groups
- Community relations
- State and local government relations
- Relations with State wildlife agencies
- Environmental education and interpretive activities
- Public involvement
- Traditional public information activities such as speeches, open houses, etc.
- Information products, such as brochures, leaflets, exhibits, slide shows, videos, public service announcements, etc.

How Was the Strategy Developed?

The national outreach strategy arose from the concerns of former director Mollie Beattie, who noted that many of the issues that reach the Director's desk were communication issues as much as natural resource issues. She tasked the Assistant Director–External Affairs with coming up with a strategy that will help the Service develop and apply its outreach resources more effectively.

The Directorate discussed outreach at the June 1996 Directorate meeting (action items from that meeting are included in the Appendices to this document). Each Regional Director and Assistant Director was asked to designate a person to serve on a team that would develop the National Outreach Strategy. This team met in November 1996 to draft this strategy paper. Development of the draft included a review of earlier Service outreach policy documents, Regional outreach plans and handbooks, public opinion research, and information on State communication programs.

A draft of this document was shared with a larger group of Service employees (including some field project leaders, GARD's, divisions chiefs, public outreach specialists, and others) for comment before being presented to the Directorate in March 1997.

Responding to Changes in Technology and Public Attitudes

The Service faces a number of communication challenges that did not exist just 5 years ago.

For example, the internet now makes it possible for inaccurate information to spread and be picked up nationwide in a matter of minutes—a phenomenon that can, and has already, affected public perceptions about the Service.

Increased public distrust of government in general has made it more difficult for natural resource agencies to do their jobs. In the Service, endangered species listing and recovery efforts and acquisition and management of some refuges have been especially affected.

Core environmental programs have been the subject of intense political debate. At the same time, private groups have filed many lawsuits challenging actions by the Service and other resource agencies.

Such efforts increase the demand for information on how Service programs work. There is a higher level of public scrutiny and debate over activities that traditionally were not controversial.

The changes of the last few years make it more critical than ever for the Service to support its resource mission with a strong, coordinated communications program.

Overcoming Obstacles to Effective Outreach

There are many obstacles to effective outreach. In analyzing its own outreach efforts, Region 5 identified some of these, which also apply to Service outreach efforts nationwide:

- Lack of trained outreach/ communication specialists;
- Lack of funding;
- Resistance to coordinating outreach efforts;
- Lack of consistency throughout the Region (Service);
- Lack of accountability;
- Multiple definitions of outreach (issues management vs. environmental education);
- Lack of clear messages; and
- Divergent views of which audiences to target.

In reviewing this document, Service employees identified a number of other obstacles, including a lack of understanding or awareness of the viewpoints of various segments of the public.

The actions recommended in this strategy will overcome these obstacles and create a stronger communications program. The major need for increased resources comes in employing professional communicators in a limited number of key positions, and in training our existing workforce.

What Does the Public Know About Us?

Effective communications must be based on an understanding of existing public knowledge and attitudes.

The Service has no public survey data on how well known the agency is or how much the public understands about our work. This deficiency hampers virtually every Service communications effort. The Service has not previously gathered this information because of restrictions on public surveys under the Paperwork Reduction Act.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that the Service is little known beyond a few basic constituent groups. Our own employees often note that the public confuses us with state wildlife agencies, BLM, National Park Service, Forest Service, and EPA. In analyzing results of its Congressional outreach efforts, Region 5 reported that many people they contacted did not know what the Service does.

Our own communications often don't help the public identify us. We often talk about our individual field stations, regions, or programs, without putting them into the larger context of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and its mission.

Some of our own employees view the notion of explaining how the Service contributes to important national values as "promoting the Service." They say the emphasis of Service communications should be on "promoting the resource."

Certainly one of our major communication goals is to convey why fish and wildlife conservation are important. But that message alone does not necessarily result in constituents who are ready to act to support or partner with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service programs.

Usually when we are communicating, we are talking about specific things the Service is doing, or wants to do, to benefit the resource. For that information to be credible, its source—the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service—must be credible. So employees do need to be concerned about public knowledge and perceptions of the Service. Wider public knowledge of what the Service does, and why we do it, will help the public make better informed decisions.

The Service already expends significant resources on education and outreach; by redirecting and focusing these efforts to become more strategic, we can reduce the need for specific funding increases for outreach. In any regard however, it is clear that the Service's current investment in communication is not adequate and does not match the level of public concern and political controversy that its programs are generating.

What We Learn From Public Opinion Research

While we have little information about how the public views the Service specifically, we do have public opinion research data about how Americans see the environment. This information provides critical background data that the Service must use to communicate with the public.

Data from several different polls conducted during the 1990's consistently show that Americans think protecting the environment is important, but most hold this belief for reasons that directly relate to human health and welfare. They also respond to the values of stewardship (preserving the environment for future generations or because it is God's creation). Arguments that species should be protected simply because they exist, or because they have an intrinsic right to be, are less likely to sway most people than reasons associated with human health or stewardship.

People also respond best to a moderate, practical tone, because they feel many environmental issues in the past have been exaggerated. Service communications should avoid sensation and hyperbole. Surveys have found that absolute, strong language often backfires. Service communications should focus on how saving fish and wildlife and their habitats help *people* as well as fish and wildlife. A more complete explanation of the polling data can be found in Appendix III of this document.

In sum, Service employees need to remember to talk about the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, not just their Region or program, and they need to explain their work using simple, moderate, practical messages that people can relate to.

What Should the Service's Messages Be?

Americans today are bombarded by information. Because they can't possibly respond to all this information, they only respond to things they care about—and they may make that decision within just a few seconds. The Service needs to simplify its messages so the public can easily see why they should care and what they can do to help.

Every Service communication with the public should (1) establish that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service does the work being described, and (2) clearly explain how this work benefits people.

We want Americans 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.

These messages describe how we are different from other government agencies, and why our work is important to people.

The purpose of these basic messages is to encourage employees at all different locations to *build upon each other's work* by consistently repeating the same messages—reinforcing simple ideas about what the Service does and why we do it.

Using these consistent messages also will help employees think about what they need to communicate and simplify it into something that has meaning to people's deeply held values and beliefs.

The Service may also wish to develop a single "tagline" or slogan that can be used in association with the agency's name, and that reinforces the Service's mission using just a few short words.

How Do Employees Use The Messages?

Repetition and consistent use by Service employees across the nation is the key to success of this effort.

The messages can become the theme of a talk to a local organization; they can be used in fact sheets and brochures; they can be the basis of an interview with a local news reporter; they can be the headlines of an exhibit. Region 3 employees have already used the messages to help develop briefing papers and fact sheets for Congressional offices. These are just a few of the ways in which consistent messages can be used.

Service employees who are communicating with the public should take the time to explain, briefly, what the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service does—and they can do so using these "messages" as their talking points. The specifics of their own program or activity can then be "stepped down" under one or more of these bullets. So, for example, Law Enforcement or Federal Aid activities can be described under "helping Americans conserve and enjoy the outdoors." Employees who work in the contaminants, endangered species, or wetlands programs can explain how their work helps "protect a healthy environment for people, fish, and wildlife." And so on for other Service programs.

Individual Service programs and activities *do* have a need for messages that are specific to their needs. These messages should be tied to resource priorities.

A number of Service programs—Federal Aid, Habitat Conservation, Migratory Birds, for example—are developing individual outreach strategies to meet their own needs. Similarly, specific activities such as wolf reintroduction into the Yellowstone ecosystem or the reintroduction of condors in Arizona, have their own unique communications needs.

These individual communication strategies can develop core messages that are specific to their own needs, while still reflecting the Service's overall messages. For example, a Federal Activities biologist can develop messages to explain how denial or approval of a federal permit will affect clean water (the healthy environment portion of the Service's message).

Outreach strategies for individual programs should be coordinated with each other and with External Affairs to make sure they are not sending competing or conflicting messages, and to ensure that they all communicate the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's mission—not just the mission of their own program. This coordination is crucial if we are to begin showing the American people how our individual programs and projects relate to a larger agency and conservation purpose.

Identifying Our Audience: Who Are We Talking To?

Most Service employees already know there is no single "public" with whom we must deal, but rather a variety of "publics" who have different concerns and interests. Broadly speaking, the Service's publics include State agencies and other wildlife professionals, conservation groups, sportsmen, educators, Congress, Native Americans, outdoor and environmental news media, the agricultural community, and many others.

A great deal of work has been done by Service Regions and programs to further identify and refine who these "publics" are. For example, the Refuge System's 100 on 100 campaign identifies five distinct external constituencies: Congress, corporate sponsors, communities, conservation groups, and communications media. Described as the "Five C's," these audiences are also relevant to the national outreach strategy.

Service employees should also be aware that studies show that people believe information received from peers and community authority figures (teachers, ministers, other experts) more than they do newspapers and sources outside the community. Service employees in each community need to identify these respected individuals and get to know them. The Service is supporting this effort through policies encouraging employees to join local organizations.

Identifying Our Audience II: Why are We Talking to Them?

The Service also needs a greater effort to address audiences systematically. The Service needs communication methods and tools to speak to its various publics individually. Development of these tools, and a systematic approach to identifying opportunities to address key audiences, is an effort that will take those two key ingredients—time and resources—to develop.

Our goal is to incite action. We are not looking for sympathy—we are looking for support!

That means our most important audiences are *decisionmakers* and *opinionleaders*. These could include local Congressmen and members of their staffs, county or city officials, State legislators, local business leaders, leaders of local conservation, sporting, and agricultural groups, members of the news media, affected landowners, and others. Each Service manager will want to know the key people on each issue in the local area.

The most effective use of our time and resources is to communicate with people like these—who can either broaden our audience and help us get information to the public, like the news media, or who can help determine whether our projects succeed.

Building Relationships and Establishing Credibility

The most important element of communication is building relationships with the people we are communicating with. It's better not to wait until we have a crisis before we call the county commissioners or the local paper. A neighbor who only comes to see you when they want to borrow a cup of sugar or your favorite hammer wears out the welcome mat pretty quickly. If we only talk to our "neighbors" when we have business to do, then we may not be in business for long.

Our jobs will be much easier if we have built a relationship with those key people early, so that by the time a difficult issue comes along they already know us and (hopefully) regard us as credible people they can work with.

The Director must lead this effort by holding regular meetings with representatives of Service constituent groups, members of Congress, and others. This effort should be further carried out by Regional Directors and GARD's, who should be certain to meet regularly with Governors, Congressional representatives, State directors, local and regional conservation group leaders, and many others.

Project leaders should also know the local Congressional representatives, leaders of community organizations, news reporters, counterparts in other natural resource agencies, and so on.

The Washington Office, Regions, and project leaders should have systematic plans for meeting with constituent groups. These relationships will tell us who can be most effective in helping to get a job done, what is likely to be our biggest obstacle, how we can work with the concerns of others, and what we will have to do to accomplish our resource priorities.

Many Service employees are still not comfortable with the idea that it is OK for them to contact Congressional district staffers, news reporters, and others. At the field level, project leaders determine who is responsible for Congressional contacts. The Service must provide additional guidance on these issues. In addition, Service managers must be evaluated and rewarded for establishing strong relationships with key people in their areas. Building these relationships must be seen as critical to the Service's resource mission, rather than something that is secondary to our "real" work of fish and wildlife conservation.

The key to making these relationships work is our credibility as individuals, and as an agency. No communication program works if the source of the information is not considered an authority on the subject, or if the representatives of the agency are seen as unresponsive, uninterested, or unfair. Service employees must stand up for the resource, but in doing so they must demonstrate awareness of and concern for community interests. Once again, this is where it becomes important for the Service to have a clear message about why our work—particularly on a controversial issue—will benefit people as well as fish and wildlife.

The Service can build this credibility if employees:

- build relationships with key figures;
- establish their identity and credibility with the media;
- make the Service an integral part of the community in their areas;
- work to establish themselves as responsive public servants who listen to public concerns;
- identify Service employees who are experts in their fields, and make them available to represent the Service on key issues.

Building a Capability for Better Communications

Good relationships with key people will help us avoid the fire drills and crises that most of us are too familiar with. But inevitably, there are going to be bad days: your local Senator hates a new policy decision; a constituent group is suing you; the city paper has run an outrageous editorial; there is a disturbing wildlife die-off at a refuge—you name it. With its great variety of responsibilities and the public's keen interest in wildlife, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on any given day is a communications crisis just waiting to happen.

To handle these situations, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service needs people who are trained in dealing with the news media and elected officials. Just as some situations require a skilled fisheries biologist or waterfowl manager, some situations need the skills of a communications professional.

Service managers must recognize that special skills are required to write and speak clearly and to deal with fast-breaking news. The Service needs experienced, trained communications professionals at selected key locations. This is especially important for field offices that are dealing with many controversial issues.

Some Service employees do not see value in working with the news media because they perceive that the media are interested only in controversy. A skilled and experienced professional communicator can identify and realize opportunities for the good news that the Service can and should be making every day.

Position descriptions for outreach jobs should require experience in news media or Congressional relations appropriate to the role in the organization. In selecting people for these jobs, the Service should wherever possible convene panels including public affairs or legislative specialists. Project leaders should consult with the ARD-EA about what sorts of qualifications are needed for particular outreach positions, and should involve the ARD-EA in reviewing the applicants.

Departmental regulations require the establishment of information-related and Congressional liaison positions, and the selection of individuals to fill these positions, to be approved by the Secretary's Office of Communications. These regulations are enforced for positions that involve significant interaction with the news media, whether or not they are classified as GS-1035 public affairs specialist positions. The Departmental clearance requirement has not generally been extended to refuge-based ORP positions. However, where these positions require significant news media or legislative outreach, they are subject to the clearance requirement.

The ARD-External Affairs will help project leaders obtain the required Departmental clearance for public outreach/public information positions. Historically the Department's Office of Communications has been very supportive of improving bureau communication resources through the hiring of qualified individuals for these positions.

A "No Surprises" Policy for Outreach

We can identify our message and target our audience, but we've got to get our message out in a timely way.

The Service's goal for communications should be a "no surprises" policy. Key Congressmen, local leaders, landowners, conservation groups, States and others do not like to be surprised by newspaper headlines announcing an important decision they knew nothing about.

A timely briefing or simple "heads up" about an upcoming decision can help avoid misunderstanding and build good will. However, such notifications must be carefully planned and timed so they do not result in premature news stories.

Each major Service decision or policy announcement should include planning for how and when outreach will be conducted, who needs to be contacted, what the message is, and who is responsible for carrying out the outreach. Such outreach plans are already prepared for endangered species listing decisions.

Both the Service and the public will be better served by this type of timely, coordinated, and planned communication on major issues.

Whose Job is Outreach?

Several employees who reviewed this document objected that hiring communications professionals would relieve other employees of the need to do outreach. "Outreach should be everybody's job," they observed.

Other Service employees counter that in the past, by making outreach everybody's job, it has become "no one's responsibility."

Outreach does indeed need to be part of everybody's job. The role of the communications professional is not only to promote positive stories and respond to crises, but also to provide advice, tools, and expertise to other employees to make our communications more effective. Experience in several field offices has shown that the presence of an experienced public affairs officer can be of enormous help to project leaders. As one project leader explained, his office was trying to do communications before—they just weren't doing it very well. Bringing a public affairs specialist on staff improved the efficiency and effectiveness of the resources being devoted to communication.

Training programs to increase the communications skills of Service biologists and managers will continue to be encouraged. NCTC is building outreach into the project leader training scheduled to begin in 1998.

Where Does Education Fit Into "Outreach"?

Environmental and conservation education are important to the Service's long-term mission. In some communities, our environmental education programs are the most effective way to establish and improve community relations. Many strong education programs have been developed that are helpful to the agency's resource goals.

In the context of the Service's overall outreach/communications program, the education community is only one of the Service's publics. Education programs are not a substitute for effective relationships with decisionmakers and opinionleaders.

Education programs should be a part of a strategy to reach key community leaders, like teachers, school board members, elected officials, and the news media.

At many locations, it is more critical to use limited outreach resources to work with local leaders and the news media than to develop another environmental education curriculum. Service managers need to be sure they have a balance of these activities in their overall outreach programs. If limited resources dictate a choice between education programs and outreach to decisionmakers and opinion leaders, education programs should be a lower priority.

Education programs can and should support specific Service resource issues. For example, an education program could be used to explain reintroduction of an endangered species, or why a particular refuge needs to conduct prescribed burns.

Many of the education programs and curricula used by Service employees today do not mention the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and its mission. When that happens, Service employees should add some basic information about the Service for students, teachers, and parents.

Service managers can take advantage of the innate appeal of education programs to improve their outreach to key audiences, for example by inviting news media or local officials to join children learning about marsh life. Inviting the news media can broaden the audience for an education project beyond a single class or school to thousands or perhaps millions of people, who then are exposed to a positive image of what the Service is doing in their community.

In sum, to support the Service's outreach goals, environmental education programs should:

- include information about the Service and its mission;
- help build community relationships;
- support specific Service resource priorities;
- make the most effective use of Service resources (for example, teaching teachers);
- serve the needs of field stations; and
- reach the broadest possible audience.

Specific recommendations for improving the distribution and use of Service education resources should be made by the Service's National Conservation Training Center working in partnership with the Regions.

Toward a "Corporate Identity;" or, Looks Count

National corporations know that looks count. They go to enormous expense to develop corporate logos, slogans, uniforms, and unified standards for their places of business.

To identify itself in the public mind, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service needs to move toward developing a visual identity.

This includes publications, exhibits, internet, signs, uniforms, and vehicles.

In addition, the Service's communication tools, such as brochures, internet, and audiovisuals, need to be reviewed and updated to ensure they are meeting the Service's communication needs.

Publications
The Service has many publications, videos, exhibits, and other outreach materials. Most of these materials have not been recently reviewed to determine whether they are effectively distributed, whether they meet the Service's communications needs, and whether the public actually likes them.

Service publications only recently began to have standard design and unified visual identity. To address this issue, in October 1996, a small group of Service design and publications staff met in Minneapolis. They have developed recommendations for a unified "look" for Service publications, and an implementation schedule for achieving that look. Their recommendations were presented to the Directorate in November. As a result, a unified design for Service publications has been adopted, and will be required for all new publications. A unified "look" for Service publications will be a major step toward clarifying the Service's image and public identity.

In addition, the Service should review its communication tools and interview Washington and Regional staffs to determine needs for new or revised products. Incorporating its key messages, the Service should then develop these materials as available funding permits. The Service should review the distribution mechanisms for these products to ensure they are reaching their intended audiences, and should develop more effective mechanisms for evaluating the effectiveness of its communication tools.

The approval process for publications, audiovisuals, and exhibits should be reviewed to ensure that it is working efficiently and that new products conform to the unified design standard and support the messages about the Service's mission and the individual program messages to be developed later.

All employees should be notified of the availability of new products through the Service newsletter and other means.

Uniforms, Signs, and Vehicles
Efforts are well underway to upgrade signage at Service facilities. The Service recently has adopted policies concerning vehicles and uniforms that will also greatly strengthen our public image.

One "outreach" step that can be taken immediately, and easily, is for uniformed Service employees to wear their uniform whenever they will be filmed for news media, documentaries, magazine articles, etc. This gives viewers and readers a visual cue that the employee being depicted works for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Special Events
The Service also celebrates numerous special "days", "weeks" and events, such as National Wildlife Refuge Week, International Migratory Bird Day, National Fishing Week, National Hunting and Fishing Day, the Duck Stamp contest, and others. Many field stations also participate in local festivals. Some field stations with limited resources find it difficult to support many different events each year.

These special events can be excellent tools for promoting the Service's message, and in the future the Service may want to examine the possibility for identifying annual "themes" that each of these celebrations could reinforce. For example, the State of Missouri, noted for its conservation education programs, identifies four "themes" yearly which are promoted in its publications, magazine, and visitor facilities. The Service may wish to examine in greater depth which events it wants to focus its resources on, and determine whether it is feasible to establish annual themes for these events.

Making Outreach Work

Outreach must become an integral part of the Service's resource management program. For this to happen, it has to be somebody's responsibility.

Currently the Service has no one who is responsible, on a national level, for ensuring that all outreach programs are coordinated, that the Service is giving consistent and not conflicting messages, and that resources are being effectively used. Likewise, the Washington Office (and some Regions) have no mechanism for ensuring coordination of outreach programs among various divisions, programs, or field stations.

The Directorate has approved establishment of a National Outreach Coordinator, whose role will be to ensure the implementation of the national outreach strategy. The coordinator will:

- Lead a national outreach team that will assist in the following tasks;
- Develop a national outreach handbook to aid employees;
- Develop and carry out outreach partnerships with corporations and private groups to broaden the Service's audience;
- Ensure that outreach plans for major decisions are developed and carried out;
- Establish relationships with and identify opportunities to reach new audiences and key constituent groups;
- Complete development and testing of the core Service "slogan" or message;
- Assist Programs and Regions in identifying and developing needed communication products and activities that can be used Servicewide, so that the Service can get the most benefit from its limited outreach resources;
- Work with programs, regions, and the directorate to coordinate outreach for major national events;
- Work with programs and regions to develop specific "stepped down" messages that can be used consistently nationwide;
- Improve communication among Service employees about how they have used outreach effectively;
- Work with NCTC on outreach training programs; and
- Develop mechanisms for evaluating the effectiveness of Service communications.

Summary: How Do We Get There From Here?

To have an effective national communications program, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service needs to have:

- Policies and leadership to reinforce the importance of unified communications;
- Communication tools that make it easier for employees to do their jobs;
- Consistent messages that employees use in all communications;
- Strategies for making outreach work;
- Effective communications training for employees; and
- Professional communications staff to assist other employees.

Action Items

1. The Service directorate will adopt the national outreach strategy. The Director will issue a memorandum directing the Service to take the needed actions to implement the strategy, including:

- Using the basic Service messages;

- Including information about the Service and its mission in all external communication efforts;

- Developing and carrying out outreach plans for major decisions and actions;

- Building relationships with Service constituents;

- Requiring media and congressional experience for key field outreach positions;

- Involving the ARD-EA in the process of establishing and filling key field outreach positions.

(AEA: April 15, 1997)

2. The Service will establish and fill a position for a National Outreach Coordinator and will establish a national outreach team to help carry out the national outreach strategy. (AEA: June 1997)

3. The Service will continue to improve the way it presents itself to the public by:

- Adhering to the new publication design standards (AEA, Service Design Committee);

- Developing guidance designed to improve Service signage and uniform policy (FWS uniform and sign committees, AEA);

- Using the name "U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service" and, where possible, the Service logo, prominently in *all* communications intended for external audiences. (Service directorate).

4. The Service will complete the staffing of Regional External Affairs organizations and will proceed with hiring of professional communications staff in key hot spot areas to assist geographic/ecosystem managers. (RD's; ongoing)

5. The National Outreach Coordinator will work with the National Conservation and Training Center and Regional staffs to develop a national outreach handbook and to provide other appropriate outreach training for Service personnel. (AEA with NCTC and outreach team; June 1998)

6. Where education programs have been identified as a priority, they will (1) include information about the Service's mission; (2) make the most efficient use of Service resources and serve field station needs; (3) seek opportunities to help build community relations and reach the broadest possible audience. (Service Directorate, ongoing)

Appendix I: Background of the Service's Outreach Programs

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has examined "outreach" on a number of occasions. In 1992 a team of Service employees put together a "white paper" called "Outreach in the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service." This paper noted that "outreach" had become a commonly used term within the Service and attempted to provide information about and define the range of outreach activities.

This paper identified the various organizational units of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service responsible for conducting outreach activities, which were defined under four broad activities: public involvement, education, public affairs, and technical information.

The white paper was intended as a starting point for developing a coordinated outreach strategy. It resulted in a January 1993 "decision document" which recommended that the Service "strengthen its outreach programs by clarifying internal organizational responsibilities, providing technical guidance and training for its employees, and seeking additional resources in order to maximize the conservation of fish and wildlife resources through the actions of an informed and committed public."

The decision document found that the Service's outreach activities suffered from "a lack of organizational focus, program and technical guidance and training, and adequate resources". It said outreach is "the opportunity and responsibility of every element of the Service." This document recommended that:

1. National outreach strategies should be prepared by each program subactivity in parallel with the FY 1995 budget process and coordinated with the technical staff offices.

2. Washington-level staff offices should prepare multi-year strategic plans for youth programs, environmental education, interpretation, and public information, and

3. Regional directors should have ARDs prepare simple outreach action plans for each program subactivity.

This document also recommended preparation of an outreach budget initiative for FY 1995.

Several Regions have developed outreach strategies. A 1992 Region 1 Outreach Strategy, prepared by a cross program team, expressed concern that the Service's message and mission were being "usurped" by other agencies and noted the Service's "uncoordinated and randomly executed patterns of outreach behavior." The Region 1 strategy defined objectives intended to meet the following goals:

- Foster public awareness of the mission of the Service and the positive contribution it makes to quality of life—theirs and that of fish and wildlife—now and for future generations

- Differentiate the Service from other natural resources agencies on issues and benefits that are important to key publics.

- Develop and maintain better understanding of our key constituencies to improve our public service

- Improve the image of the Service and increase outreach efficiency by focusing and integrating efforts across program areas

- Build on positive work and relationships of Service programs to enhance the public perception of the Service

- Focus outreach efforts on improving and building long-term relationships with important constituencies to accomplish the Service mission.

It is worth noting that the same concerns and goals identified by Region 1 four years ago apply equally well to the Service's national concerns in 1996.

In June 1994, Region 5 formed a cross-program team of outreach specialists to establish a framework for outreach planning with the Region. The Region subsequently published "One Step at a Time: An Outreach Workbook" to help employees design, implement, and evaluate outreach efforts and to promote outreach as a management tool that can be used to address resource issues.

This document defined "outreach" as: "Communications; the image of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service that each employe projects every day." Both Region 1 and Region 5 documents stressed that "outreach" is part of every employee's responsibility.

In 1995, recognizing the need to improve the Service's communications with a variety of publics, including Congress, the Service instituted an "external affairs" organization in the Regions that paralleled the Washington Office structure. Assistant Regional Directors—External Affairs were responsible for relationships with both news media and elected officials, and Regions began the process of establishing positions within the external affairs organization for legislative specialists who would focus on building relationships with States, counties, and other elected officials and local district offices for members of Congress. One of the major purposes for this organization was to ensure that the Service had informed and involved these officials concerning its decisions.

Service program areas also have embraced outreach. Refuges has developed a "100 on 100" campaign to increase public awareness of the National Wildlife Refuge system by its 100th birthday. Habitat Conservation, Federal Aid, and Migratory Birds also are working on outreach strategies. The Endangered Species division now requires outreach plans to accompany all listing documents.

While the existence of these programs demonstrates the Service's recognition of the need for outreach, these efforts have not been coordinated with each other to create unified messages or to develop the foundation for an overall, national Service outreach strategy. The Service's communications program continues to be fragmented, with individual Regions, programs and field stations carrying out independent communication programs. Such an approach misses the opportunity for employees to build upon each other's work by reinforcing consistent messages.

Marketing

"Marketing" for name identification alone works for beer and peanut butter, but not for resolving complex issues or burnishing an already tarnished or nonexistent reputation.

Marketing often sounds like an easy solution, and the Service has listened to the views of a variety of marketing experts in the past few years. Most have reinforced the message that the Service must target its audiences but none have developed a comprehensive communications strategy for the Service. These discussions have helped Service employees think about communications as an important tool in resource conservation.

Appendix II: Action Items from the June 1996 Directorate Meeting

1. Develop and test a unified Service message that identifies who we are and helps the public feel positive about us, and which would be incorporated into everyday communications including environmental education, media relations, Congressional relations, and community relations.

2. Complete the reorganization of regional External Affairs programs by filling positions for Regional Congressional Affairs specialists.

3. Refocus our current outreach capability to make it more strategic. Develop a national outreach strategy that will provide a unified Service message and strategies for incorporation into all Service outreach efforts. Establish and fill a national outreach coordinator position under the AD-EA.

4. Build media and Congressional relations qualifications into outreach positions at field stations. Develop standard position descriptions for all new outreach positions. Review and revise existing outreach position descriptions to incorporate media and Congressional outreach. Issue guidance to employees to implement this recommendation.

5. Implement ARD-EA review of all field outreach position descriptions and participation in selection process for new outreach hires at field stations.

6. Emphasize building relationships with key community leaders, decisionmakers at all levels, and opinion leaders in the public and private sectors as a higher priority than publications and other product development in ongoing outreach efforts. Issue guidance to employees that implements this decision.

7. Establish a team including Service employees, corporate leaders with publishing experience, and others to review Service publications and make recommendations for improving them to present a unified Service image and message; to review existing management processes to ensure that Service products are strategic, cost effective and reflect the Service's priority message; and to recommend evaluation processes for determining their effectiveness in achieving Service communication goals.

8. As part of the national outreach strategy, build a stronger communications capability by establishing and filling one public affairs specialist position to assist each GARD and locating these positions in key field offices.

9. Regional directors should distribute a memorandum encouraging project managers and other Service staff to inform and educate local members of Congress and their staff about Service activities and policies.

Appendix III: Results of Public Opinion Research

Peter Hart and associates in July 1996 reported that voters cited the following as their main reasons for supporting environmental protection:

- Humankind's interdependence on the natural world for existence and survival.

- Preserving the environment for future generations.

- The irreplaceability of the Earth and its natural resources.

A survey in April 1996 by Beldon and Russonello Research and Communications, conducted for the Consultative Group on Biological Diversity, reported the following support for a variety of reasons to protect the environment:

- Wanting one's family to live in a healthy, pleasing environment (79%)

- Responsibility to leave the earth in good shape for future generations (71%)

- Respect for Nature as God's creation (67%)

- Appreciation for beauty of nature (63%)

- A desire for a balanced environment so that one "personally can have a productive, healthy life" (59%)

- A patriotic feeling of an "American wanting to protect the natural resources and beauty of this country" (58%)

- The belief that "all life found in nature has a right to exist" (55%, the value with the smallest appeal).

This survey recommended that communications:

- focus on saving habitat and/or ecosystems, rather than individual species;

- show how humans need and benefit from saving habitat and species;

- lay responsibility for the increased loss of habitat and species on human behavior;

- strike a practical tone (advocate stopping the destruction of things that help humans, and focusing on habitat; avoiding sensationalism, exaggeration, and calls to save everything.)

This survey found that public support is strongest for conservation measures that clearly support human needs (such as clean air or water) and that the public needs strong examples of how the action called for benefits them, in their community. Support for conservation weakens when other issues (such as the impact on the economy) come into play; or when people don't clearly perceive that the problem is caused by human behavior or that the species in question has any direct benefits to people. The argument that all species have value does not work very effectively for some insects, rodents, and other species perceived as potential pests.

Other polls (Times Mirror 1992) also found that the public's environmental concern contains a strong emphasis on protecting human health. The public is very concerned about water pollution, toxic waste dumps, shortages of good drinking water, air pollution, and local problems such as shortages of land fill space, Times Mirror reported.

Outreach Plan Checklist

Use this checklist to help think through and organize your outreach needs.

Assessment:

- State the problem and why action is necessary in one clear, concise sentence.
- Who does the problem, issue, or situation affect?
- How does the current problem, issue, or situation affect fish and wildlife resources?

Audience(s):

- Which publics (individuals or groups) can we reach that will have the most influence to make change?
- What are the concerns, expectations, perceptions, and biases of the audience(s)?
- Describe the target audience(s) in one clear, concise sentence.
- List the Service and Departmental officials who should be informed of the issue or situation before you begin your outreach activity.
- List all Congressional districts and other Federal, state, county, or city officials who need to be contacted about the issue.
- List local, regional, and (if appropriate) national news media who will be interested in the issue.
- List constituent groups who should be contacted. (Be sure to consider conservation groups, agricultural and business interests, Native Americans, trade organizations, etc.)

Goal:

- What is the desired outcome of the outreach activity?
- How do we want our audiences to feel or act as a result of our efforts?
- State the outreach goal in one clear, concise sentence.

Message:

- What do we want our audience(s) to know or understand?
- How can we use the Service's three basic messages to explain why this issue is important to people as well as wildlife?
- State the main message in one clear, concise sentence.

Tools:

- What outreach tools are most appropriate to achieving our goal?
- Has each audience been addressed?
- List the tools to be employed in this outreach effort.

Schedule:

- Is there a specific date (such as publication of a Federal Register notice) that this issue or situation is tied to?
- List the specific outreach activities needed for this issue (for example, briefings, public meetings, press conference, etc.)
- Develop a schedule that shows when each event must occur.

Implementation:

- What personnel, funds, and supplies are needed to implement this outreach effort?
- What internal and external partners can be involved in this endeavor?
- What resources will we provide, and what will be provided by our partners?
- List a budget for this effort.

Reality check:

- Does every item listed above contribute to achieving your goal? Can any step be improved?
- Evaluate the effectiveness of each step after it has occurred, and revise your plan accordingly.

Sample Outreach Plan Format

Use this sample format for documents requiring outreach plans. You can adapt or modify the format if you need to, as long as you include the information covered here.

Title
(Outreach Plan for the _____)

Issue:
(State the issue in one or two sentences.)

Basic Facts About The Issue:
(In bullets or *short* paragraphs, outline basic facts about the action and why it is needed.)

Communications Goals:
(In a few bullets, state what you want to see as the outcome of your communications effort. If appropriate, address how the action will affect people and include what the Service will do to address public concerns.)

Message:
(In one short sentence, state why this issue is important to people and wildlife. Whenever possible, say how the action contributes to a healthy, clean environment; to outdoor recreation; or to preservation of important American heritage and traditions.)

Interested Parties:
(Identify groups/individuals who will be most affected or are otherwise interested in this action.)

Key Date:
(If there is a specific date the action is tied to, such as a court action or Federal Register publication, fill it in.)

Materials Needed:
(List materials that need to be prepared, such as press release, fact sheets, speech, talking points, charts, maps, photos, video, etc. Identify who will prepare the materials.)

Strategy:
(Explain your strategy for communicating this information. Do you plan to hold a press conference, for example, accompanied by in-person briefings for concerned groups? Can the information be communicated simply by news release, or perhaps only phone calls to key people are really required?)

Action Plan:
- (Under "interested party," list who needs to be contacted. Include Members of Congress or their staffs; State and local officials; news reporters; business/agricultural leaders; and constituent groups. Include groups who disagree as well as those who support the action.)
- (Under "method of contact," indicate whether person will be contacted by phone, personal meeting, briefing, etc.)
- (Under "person responsible," indicate what FWS employee or cooperator will make the contact.)
- (Under "phone/fax" list appropriate numbers so you'll have them handy.)
- (Under "date" list date when the contact is to be made.)

Action Plan

Interested Party	Method of Contact	Person Responsible	Phone/Fax	Date

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
1849 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20240

202/208 4131
Fax: 202/208 7407
http://www.fws.gov/