

Media Relations



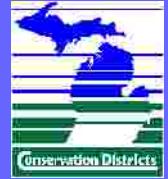
& Outreach

Training Module 13



What You'll Learn In This Module

- | Why Conservation Districts need the informed support of their communities in order to be effective in carrying out their mission.
- | Why District directors and staff must be able to communicate important information to the newspapers, radio, and television stations serving their area.
- | Why a good working relationship with the media can help Districts get their message out quickly.



Discussion Questions

- | Why is working with the media important to your District?
- | What should the District do to prepare for working with the media?
- | What are the components of a good press release?
- | What are some things you can do to be more successful in interviews?
- | How can you establish a good rapport with reporters and editors?



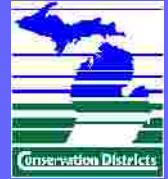
Getting the Message Straight

- | Designate one person to be the District's spokesperson. It should be the District Administrator/Exec. Director, the Board chair, or someone selected by the chair.
- | Make sure that the spokesperson understands the issues and concerns of the District and can give information which is understandable, concise, and factually correct.



Getting the Message Straight (continued)

- | Unless the spokesperson is doing a long feature article or radio call-in show, only one message should be given at a time. For example, if the news is that your District has received a \$50,000 grant, focus on the project the grant will help pay for; don't "muddy the waters" by mentioning other District business.
- | The spokesperson should avoid personal opinions; stick to the facts of the situation and the actions taken to address the situation. Don't say "I" when communicating with the media; say "the Board," "the District staff," etc.



Press Releases

The best press releases have these things in common:

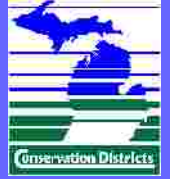
- They are one page long
- They are typed and double-spaced
- They cover one subject
- They always include the spokesperson's name and telephone number (in case a reporter needs to follow up and get more information)



Press Releases (continued)

Your press release should always answer six basic questions of journalism: who, what, where, when, why, and how.

Make your press release interesting. Ask yourself: “Why should the newspaper print it?” “Why would anyone want to hear your press release read on the radio?” Focus on the one thing people should remember after reading/hearing your press release. Start it by stating that one memorable item.



Interviews

Doing interviews with the media is an excellent way to get your message across. The most important rule of giving good interviews is:

Know your subject and know what one thing you want people to remember when you're through talking.



Interviews (continued)

Whether interviews are done on radio, on television, by telephone, or in person one-on-one, remember to be yourself – when you're at your best. Most of us are capable of speaking clearly and distinctly, using eye contact, and holding an audience without thinking about it.

When the subject and the audience are important to you, you speak well. Your points are clear, you know your subject, and you don't speak too much or too little.



Interviews (continued)

If you are asked to appear on television, focus on the interviewer as you speak. Don't worry about the cameras, lights, or other people. Grooming and dress are important, but don't go to extremes. For example, if you're being interviewed during the spring tree sale in a barn, don't wear a suit/dress (unless that's the way you normally dress).



Etiquette

- | Have your chosen spokesperson make the effort to identify and personally visit the offices of all the newspaper (s), radio stations, and television stations in your District and introduce themselves to the appropriate editor and reporter. Provide mailing address, phone number, and email address to each media representative
- | Compliment the reporter if they did a good job of presenting your story.



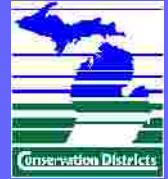
Etiquette (continued)

- | Don't criticize a reporter for not writing your story, or for doing it poorly. If you think there's a pattern or bad coverage or no coverage developing, meet with the editor. Ask how you can improve your procedures to make their job easier. Remember, sometimes even the best story never gets reported by the media; no one gets every press release in the paper.



Summary

- | When working with the media, know what you want to communicate. Be knowledgeable, concise, and focused.
- | If you are representing the Conservation District to the media, don't discuss personal opinions or say "I", when speaking. Stick to official business and factual information.
- | Good press releases are one page long, focus on one topic, are typed and doubled-spaced, are interesting, and provide a contact name and telephone number. Remember the six rules: who, what, where, when, why, and how.



Summary

- | If you give an interview, be yourself – when you're at your best. Be prepared – know what one message you want to communicate. If you're interested in what you're saying, others will pay attention.
- | Establish a working relationship with the editors and reporters covering your Conservation District. They should know your spokesperson and how to reach them. Don't criticize your media; they have a job to do and standards to uphold, just as you do.



Review Questions

- | Why is working with the media important to your District?
- | What should the District do to prepare for working with the media?
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- | How can you establish a good rapport with reporters and editors?