



January 2006

**"MOURN NOT
THE
DEAD...BUT
MOURN THE
APATHETIC
THROUGH —
THE COWED
AND MEEK
WHO SEE THE
WORLD'S
GREAT
ANGUISH AND
ITS WRONG,
AND DARE
NOT TO SPEAK"**

– Ralph Chaplin

For more information,
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WATERSHED STEWARDSHIP ACTION KIT

Media and Publicity



The media and other public forums offer unlimited opportunities to publicize programs and events. Getting publicity for a cleanup, educational program, or other function can be a way to educate the community about the importance of water resource protection and help to attract volunteers to your group or activity. The more publicity you get for your program, the more opportunities you might have to sign up new participants.

BELOW ARE A FEW IDEAS FOR PUBLICIZING ACTIVITIES:

- Posters or flyers on bulletin boards in stores, libraries, schools, town halls, and other public places.
- Flyers distributed door-to-door or by mail.
- Articles in your newsletter or in other groups' newsletters.
- Displays describing your group and projects in parks, at malls, and at special events.
- Postings on Web site calendars and e-mail list serves. Visit www.iwla.org/sos/awm/events to post information on the League's Watershed Activities Calendar.
- Articles, announcements, or ads in newspapers and magazines.
- Radio and TV public service announcements or talk shows.

HOW TO WRITE A NEWS RELEASE

Most press people are very willing to hear news tips, story ideas, or announcements of events by phone or in person. But they will usually ask you to give them written information first. That means you should send them a news release, even if you're announcing a cleanup or a watershed association meeting.



Writing a news release doesn't require a polished writing style—the reporter or editor will likely rewrite it anyway. It does require that you get the information and the focus of the story across quickly, simply, and accurately. The following are some points to keep in mind.

The Five W's—Who, What, When, Where and Why: It is very important that you tell the reporter or editor (and therefore the reader) what's happening, who's doing it, when and where it's taking place, and the purpose of the event, project, or award. This information should be included in the first paragraph. This paragraph should also get people's attention. The best way to do that is to tell readers how it will affect them. That should be the focus of the story.

Quotes: People always like to read what someone else has to say. In a news release, quotes help the reporter write the story. He or she may want to interview you or the key person involved in the project, but may not have the time. When you supply a ready-made quote or quotes, the reporter can write a story that sounds as if he or she did an interview.

Photos: Ask reporters if they would like a photo. Daily papers may not want one if the story is an announcement. If the story has a human-interest angle, a photo will improve the presentation of the story and help you get more space. Make sure the photo is clear, has good definition, and is either 5x7 or 8x10 glossy. (Matte finish does not reproduce well.) Photos with people, especially children, engaged in hands-on activities are the most successful. Reporters may use their own photographer if they're doing an interview.

Format: Certain key information must be on the release; otherwise, the reporter might be confused, want more information, or need to verify facts. Each press release should include the following:

1) Type FOR RELEASE or FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE at the top righthand corner of the first page. Underneath put the date you want the story to be released. Underneath that, put the names of two contact people and their phone numbers. If one person cannot be reached, the reporter has an alternative.

2) Include a simple headline. State the facts in the first paragraph, keeping the focus up front. For example: "Izaak Walton League Stops Erosion in Beaver Creek." This headline draws the readers' interest by telling them they will benefit from the project. Ideally, they'll want to find out why and how, and read the story. It is not necessary to copy actual headline style. The paper's headline writer will sometimes

rewrite it, depending on size and shape of the space allotted for the story. Radio and TV will do the same. Your headline will give them the focus of the story.

3) Include a dateline. Put your city or town in capital letters at the beginning of the first paragraph, followed by your state's abbreviation, so the reporter knows where the information originated.

4) Use double-spaced lines for easy reading. Put each new idea in a separate paragraph and keep all paragraphs short. Single spacing and long, unreadable paragraphs will lose the reporter's and the reader's interest.

5) If the release is more than one page, put "More..." at the bottom of each page. At the end of the release, type "-30-." This is a universal symbol that will tell the reporter they have reached the end. Keep the release short. One to two pages are ideal.

6) Make sure your dates, times, and places are accurate. Make sure names are spelled correctly.

7) Your last paragraph should be a short (2-3 sentences) description of the event or program.

Deadlines: When you contact reporters, ask about deadlines and make sure you are on time. Try to have your release arrive a day or two before you want the story to appear. If you send it too far in advance, the release might get misplaced. Too late and, well, it's too late. When reporters call you for information, be sure to ask for their deadline.

Follow up: Be sure to call reporters and editors to follow up on your release. Ask if the release was received and offer to answer any questions. Ask if they will print the announcement. Invite a reporter to attend the event. Personal contact will help you develop a relationship with reporters and editors so they will be more likely to cover future events.

