

## Part IV Messages

### *Centennial Handbook*



*Knowing your audiences can help  
you face just about anyone.*

# What Should the Service's Messages Be?

*We want Americans to know who we are, what we do, and why we do it.*

Every Service communication with the public should establish that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service does the work being described, and 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,
- 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 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 how to simplify it so it has meaning to people's deeply held values and beliefs.

# Messages

## *For the National Wildlife Refuge System Centennial and Beyond*

### **FWS Message**

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.

### **Refuge System-specific Message**

The National Wildlife Refuge System:

- is the only network of Federal lands dedicated specifically to wildlife conservation.
- provides habitat stepping stones for migratory birds.
- provides habitat for threatened and endangered species.
- provides habitat for some of the nation's most important fishery resources.
- encompasses rare and biologically rich ecosystems that often serve as the cornerstones of landscape-level conservation programs.
- is managed by experts in habitat management and restoration.
- Through its stewardship of the National Wildlife Refuge System, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is continuing the legacy of some of our nation's great environmental leaders such as Theodore Roosevelt and Rachel Carson.

### **FWS Message**

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service helps protect a healthy environment for people, fish and wildlife.

### **Refuge System-specific Message**

The National Wildlife Refuge System:

- contributes to a healthy environment upon which all living things, including people, depend.
- contributes to a healthy environment that is essential to a sustainable economy.
- helps safeguard our rich natural heritage for future generations.
- makes significant contributions to local communities by enhancing the quality of life, and through increased tourism and commerce.

### **FWS Message**

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service helps Americans conserve and enjoy the outdoors.

### **Refuge System-specific Message**

The National Wildlife Refuge System:

- offers outstanding wildlife-dependent recreational opportunities, including hunting and fishing, wildlife photography and observation, and environmental education and interpretation.
- Thousands of citizen advocates care for and take pride in stewardship of the National Wildlife Refuge System.

# How To Use These Messages

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

## **Seize the Opportunity**

These consistent messages can be used in many different ways; here are a few ideas:

- as the theme of a talk to a local organization
- in fact sheets and brochures
- as the basis of an interview with a local news reporter
- as 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.

## **A Springboard to Talk About Other Programs**

Service employees who communicate with the public should take the time to explain, briefly, what the Service does—and they can use these messages as talking points. The specifics of their own program or activity can then be stepped down under one or more of these bullets. For example, refuge public use, 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.”

Individual Service programs and activities do have a need for messages that are specific to their needs. These core messages should be tied to resource priorities while still reflecting the Service’s overall messages. For example, a refuge biologist can develop messages to explain how denying or approving a permit will affect clean water (the healthy environment portion of the Service’s message). Or, an outdoor recreation planner (ORP) can tie in the “conserving and enjoying the outdoors” portion of the Service’s message when talking about wildlife-dependent recreational opportunities.

# Identifying Our Audiences

## **Not One, But Many**

Most Service employees already know that our agency has no single public, but a variety of publics with different concerns and interests. Some of our 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.

## **Another Important Audience**

Through its original 100 on 100 Outreach Campaign, the National Wildlife Refuge System identified five distinct external audiences: Congress, Corporate Sponsors, Communities, Conservation Groups, and Communications Media. While we tend to focus mainly on external audiences, we must not forget one of our most important audiences—our internal audience—you, the employee.

## **An Easy, Effective Idea**

Studies show that people believe information received from peers and community authority figures, such as teachers and ministers, more than newspapers and sources outside their community. Identify those respected individuals in your community and get to know them.