

# CHAPTER 2: Public Relations Basics

**“Some are born great, some achieve greatness, and some hire public relations officers.”** Daniel J. Boorstein

## Who, What, When, Where, Why and How

Every media source is required to set aside time for community service. To make the most of your opportunity to get your program or project listed, the following public relations (PR) basics will help. Whether the need is to promote, notify, announce, invite, or get an event, park and recreation program, fund raising project, park dedication, and the like listed in the local paper’s calendar section or announced on the radio – make sure all the questions are answered: who, what, when, where, why and how. These are the questions all journalists are taught to answer before they are set loose on the streets. Think about these questions and your unique answers<sup>3</sup>:

### *Who*

- Who are you or your entity in the community?
- Did you ever make news that people still remember, such as a rescue or a citation for community achievement?
- Who are you in your professional community?
- Have you done anything that made industry news?
- Who stands to benefit from what you have to say in interviews?
- Did anyone live, die, or make news because they did what you are selling or advocating?
- Who works with you and are they newsworthy in any way?

### *What*

- What do you do?
- What event, program, park or project are you promoting, if any?
- What is the primary idea or product you are selling?
- What can someone learn from your entity or your event?
- What are the trends that will shape the future of your work?
- What is the origin of your work?
- What will the visitor experience when they visit your event?

### *When*

- When does your product or event become effective?
- When can your audience see you or your product?
- When does the story of your product or idea begin?
- If your audience does what you tell them to do, when can they expect a change?
- When should a story about you run – or does it matter?
- When does your offer expire and, if it does, when will it be available again?

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<sup>3</sup> Parkhurst, How to Get Publicity, pp. 27-29

### *Where*

- Where can your idea or product be seen?
- Where is your project going to be most effective?
- Where is the local tie-in or distributor for your product or idea?
- Where is your event going to be held?
- Are there any additional local people or places that stand to benefit from what you do? If so, where are they?

### *Why*

- Why do you do what you do?
- Why should anyone else do what you do?
- Why did you decide to pursue this line of thinking?
- Why do any of us need to learn more about it?
- Why won't we be better off doing it another way?
- Why should your audience listen to you above any other expert in your field?
- Why did you decide to take your ideas to the public through publicity appearances?

### *How*

- How does it work?
- How do people get it?
- How easy is it for the average viewer in the audience to use?
- How long does it last?
- How good is it?
- How long does it take to get there?

Now that you have your answers, you need to determine the best tools to get your story and product before the public.

## **Basic PR Tools**

### ➤ *Word-of-mouth*

There is no substitute for the most powerful marketing tool, word-of-mouth. Word-of-mouth is any unofficial form of communication your agency can use to get the message out about your services. If you get people talking about your park and recreation agency, you have successful word-of-mouth public relations. It is free and it is effective. You can promote word-of-mouth by encouraging your visitors and others in the community to share their experiences with your agency.

Generally, people tell around five other people about their experiences. People most often hear about places and experiences from their friends, co-workers, and relatives. Because they share similar interests and value these opinions, they are considered credible. These people have no association with the agency; therefore they are considered an unbiased source of information. For example, if your neighbor participated in a swimming class at your park and recreation agency and had a great

time, she will share that experience with you and you will feel you are knowledgeable about the type of services you can expect.

How to generate word-of-mouth dialog:

- Keep track of customer activity. Find out how many people view the organization's website each month. Conduct surveys on how they found out about the organization's programs and facilities. Offer discounts as a reward for those who reveal their source of recommendation.
- Contact local community opinion leaders and offer them the opportunity to be involved.
- Encourage group membership options; have a 'tell-a-friend' discount.
- Identify customers that sent letters of praise and acknowledge them for taking the time to say thanks. Invite them back for more involvement. Ask to use their comments and their names for an upcoming flyer or brochure endorsing your project or program.
- Host special events to stimulate customers' interests further. Continue to inform those customers of services through e-mail, newsletters.
- Deal with customer complaints in a quiet and efficient manner. Addressing a complaint can turn that person into a supporter who will tell others. Not addressing it means not only the risk of losing that customer but others they may communicate with in the future. If complaints are encouraged, the organization has the chance to remedy legitimate complaints and win back a customer who may then make positive reports to others, enhancing good will. Research has found that even if the complaint is not fully settled to the consumer's satisfaction, they are still more likely to come back than if a complaint is not made, or recognized.
- Use the Internet to encourage word of mouth by placing phrases in e-mails or on the web: "Send this page to a friend," "If you think your friend might be interested in this, please e-mail them!"
- Train staff to record satisfied or dissatisfied customers/incidents and track the information on a daily log or diary. Have customers record their experiences. For example, in the backcountry huts in the New Zealand National parkland, visitors are encouraged to write down notes and jot lists of needed improvements.
- Create positive first and last impressions. What is the first thing and the last thing visitors see?
- Make the visitors' experience memorable. Give them something to talk to their friends about; e.g. souvenirs, name entertainment, fireworks, courteous staff, photo opportunities, etc.

## ➤ *Press Release*

The terms press, news, and media release are often used interchangeably, however, press release generally means print media such as newspapers, while media or news release might include all news media – from print to electronic (radio, TV, Web) broadcasts. A press release is the most commonly used format and term.

A press release is one of the primary PR vehicles to communicate news and information to the media. Today, journalists receive a tremendous volume of press releases, and many often end up in the trash. In order to ensure your press release is read you must have a press release that: 1) is received via the preferred medium (does the journalist prefer e-mail, fax or hardcopy?), and 2) captures the journalist's attention with a good newsworthy lead-in title or topic.

### Press Release Writing Tips

*Be Newsworthy.* For an announcement to be considered newsworthy it must have a broad, general interest to the target audience and a strong news angle (e.g., material information, new development, drama, human interest, local angle, consequence, etc.). In addition, your release needs to be written in a journalistic, rather than marketing style. It should be objectively written as though a reporter were writing the story for you. Most importantly, your release needs to "inform" people, NOT just sell them something.

*Headline Formats.* In most cases your headline is the first thing an editor sees when reviewing your release. An effective headline can make the difference between an editor covering your story or hitting the delete button. To create an effective headline consider the following points:

- Limit your headline to no more than one line. Many newsrooms have a limit on how many characters they can receive in a headline and their systems are programmed to reject releases that exceed this limit.
- The headline should provide an editor with a tantalizing snapshot of what the news release is about. This is critical as many journalists view releases over their wire system by headline only, then pick and choose when they want to view the full text of the release.
- The headline should include the name of the company issuing the release.
- Do not include the terms "Company," "Incorporated" or "Limited" or their abbreviations unless they are necessary to clearly identify the organization, i.e. Tandy Corporation vs. Tandy Brands.
- Do not use exclamation points or dollar signs.
- Attribute all potentially critical, controversial, or judgmental statements to a specific, quotable individual.

*Writing Style Requirements.* Writing a professional and effective news release can be difficult. Here are a few guidelines to consider when crafting your release:

- Get to the point quickly and back it up with specific quotes and evidence.
- Use proper grammar and punctuation. Check for typos, and do not just rely on spell check!
- Address who, what, when, where, why and how in the news release.
- Double check phone numbers and URLs.
- Read your release out loud to see if it makes sense.
- Include quotes from an official in the organization to convey opinion or affiliation.
- Don't forget to put your contact name, release date, dateline, web site URL and phone number in your release. Also make sure you are available for phone calls after sending the release out.
- Your release should be written objectively, as if the writer has no affiliation with the company.
- Do not use pronouns such as I, we, us, our, your, etc. except in direct quotes. Write in the third person.
- Do not use egotistical statements or hype (i.e. 'we make the best widgets East of the Rockies'), but do inform the reader of your status in the park and recreation field.
- Always include standard boilerplate information about your agency in the last paragraph. The headline for this section should read "About (insert your company's name here)."

*Length requirements.* Your release should be concise and to the point. You should be able to convey your message in two pages or less. Releases that are less than 50 words in length tend to be advertisements and cannot be run as a news release. "A release is a miniature news article and should conform to the journalistic tradition of saying as much as possible in the shortest space with the plainest language."<sup>4</sup>

Use bullet points sparingly.

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<sup>4</sup> Op.Cit, p. 46.

## **Sample Press Release Template:**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
(Date of Release)

**CONTACT:** (Name)  
(Phone Number)

**ATTENTION GRABBING HEADLINE: KEEP IT SHORT, ALL CAPITAL LETTERS AND CENTERED**

*Subtitle to further expand on headline if needed  
(Remember who, what, where, when, why and how)*

*Lead Paragraph:* Opening should be compelling and make the reader want to continue. Most important information always at the top: What is happening, who is involved, where and when.

*2<sup>nd</sup> Paragraph:* Quote from an expert involved, director, top management or elected official that emphasizes significant information.

*3<sup>rd</sup> Paragraph:* Why is this information significant and newsworthy? The more localized the greater chance of being used by newspapers.

*4<sup>th</sup> + Paragraph:* Details of the event and an opportunity to add additional information on the organization, event, program or activities or issue being announced...

*Final Paragraph:* One sentence description of everyone involved, including partners/sponsors.

Try to keep your release 1 to 1 1/2 pages.

MORE (if release goes to a second page)

### or -30- (to indicate end)



## CALENDAR LISTING

### City of Los Angeles Department of Recreation and Parks

Public Information Division 1200 W. 7th St., Suite 700 Los Angeles, CA 90017 (213) 928-9200 / fax: (213) 928-9288

May 24, 2007

#### MEDIA CONTACT(S)

Harvey Drut: (213) 928-9296, or cell, (323) 816-6711

Jane Kolb: (213) 928-9294, or cell, (323) 816-6712

Cabrillo Marine Aquarium: (310) 548-7562

### ***KIDS CAN “SLEEP WITH THE FISHES”***

Friday, June 22, 2007 at 7:00 p.m. – Saturday, June 23, 2007 at 8:00 a.m.

**SAN PEDRO** – Cabrillo Marine Aquarium, a City of Los Angeles Department of Recreation and Parks facility located at 3720 Stephen M. White Dr. in San Pedro, will hold the first of three “Sleep with the Fishes” overnight adventures for students in grades 3-6 from 7:00 p.m. on Friday, June 22, to 8:00 a.m. on Saturday, June 23, 2007.

Through a variety of fun activities to learn more about nocturnal animals of the sea and shore, including grunion, sharks, and plankton, kids will be able to get answers to such questions as: What glows in the dark? Who trawls the deep for food at night? What are the slimiest ocean animals?

There will also be games, and participants will have an opportunity to complete take-home projects. Breakfast and snacks will be provided – children will need to bring a sleeping bag, pillow, etc., and a sense of curiosity and wonder. The program will also be offered July 20-21 and August 17-18.

The cost is \$35 per child (\$31 for members of Friends of Cabrillo Marine Aquarium). Reservations are recommended as space is limited. For more information, call the aquarium at (310) 548-7562, or go to [www.cabrilloaq.org](http://www.cabrilloaq.org).

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For more information about Department of Recreation and Parks events, activities, services, programs, and facilities, go to [www.laparks.org](http://www.laparks.org), or call 1-888-LA PARKS (527-2757).

*Use of Quotations.* Good quotes can get the reader's attention. Pithy quotes in the press release allow the organization to stay on message and helps ensure accuracy. Reporters make quotes a building block that moves the story forward.

This quote answers the question, stays on message, expresses the organization's values and creates a good story:

*Sample Question: "What is it about this acquisition that makes it appealing to your organization?"*

*Sample Quote: "This public/private partnership stands as testament to the vision of people working together today to preserve lands for the future generations of tomorrow."*

### **Sample Press Release with Quote:**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
06/03/2004**

**Statement by Secretary Chrisman Regarding Tentative  
Agreement with Hearst Corporation on Terms of  
Conservation Transaction on Hearst Ranch**

The California Resources Agency, the Wildlife Conservation Board (WCB), California Coastal Conservancy, California State Parks, American Land Conservancy and the California Rangeland Trust have reached tentative agreement with the Hearst Corporation on the terms of a conservation transaction on the 82,000-acre Hearst Ranch located in San Luis Obispo County.

"The State and the Hearst Corporation have come a long way in reaching agreement on the key issues. Concluding this multifaceted transaction will involve significant public process, including meetings of the Wildlife Conservation Board and the State Coastal Conservancy. Once consummated, I believe all Californians will be well served by our efforts to preserve this spectacular working landscape as envisioned by William Randolph Hearst nearly a century ago," said Mike Chrisman, Secretary for Resources.

The transaction includes the transfer of coastal properties on the Ranch to State Parks for public access and a conservation easement that will preserve the ecological and agricultural values of the property. The parties to the transaction will begin preparing the final legal documents for presentation to their respective boards later this summer. These documents, along with the details of the proposed transaction, will be released to the public in advance of all public meetings involving the Hearst proposal. As public agencies, WCB and Coastal Conservancy will involve the public's participation prior to final action by their boards.

### ➤ *Media Alerts or Advisories*

A media alert or advisory is used to inform the media about a press conference or special event. It is a simple, one page "Who, What, When, Where, Why, and How" document. It is often sent to the press one week (or a few days) in advance and serves as an invitation for press to attend the event.



*Sample Media Advisory*

<b>FOR PLANNING PURPOSES ONLY</b> (Date of Advisory)	<b>CONTACT:</b> (Name) (Phone number) (e-mail address)
<b>MEDIA ADVISORY</b> <b>RESOURCES AGENCY SALTON SEA COMMITTEE</b> <b>INAUGURAL MEETING SET FOR JANUARY 20, 2004</b>	
<p>SACRAMENTO – California Secretary for Resources Mike Chrisman today announced the inaugural meeting of the Resources Agency Salton Sea Advisory Committee, bringing together representatives of local, state and federal agencies, and nonprofit organizations to cooperate on efforts to restore the Salton Sea ecosystem.</p>	
<b>WHO:</b>	Secretary for Resources Mike Chrisman Sea Advisory Committee Members
<b>WHAT:</b>	Inaugural Meeting of the Salton Sea Advisory Committee
<b>WHERE:</b>	California Museum for History, Women and the Arts Large Classroom 1020 O Street Sacramento, CA
<b>WHEN:</b>	Tuesday, January 20, 2004, 10 a.m. ###

➤ *Press Kits*

Press or media kits are hard copy folders with press releases, and other materials for press conferences and events. A press kit in a folder with the organization's logo is sharp and professional looking and is a great idea for all written material.

A press kit is also an opportunity to provide information and collected articles to introduce your organization or services to the public. It is important that the organization's public relations representative always has material available to give background information to necessary contacts.

Press kits are important as a means to initiate communication between an organization and the media, investors, donors, clients and/or employees. Media kits can help gain positive media coverage and exposure, attract prospective investors and donors, or promote upcoming events.

*Things to include in a press kit:*

- Press releases
- Cover letters

- Background, Frequently Asked Questions, or fact sheets on organization that could include website address, history, and statistics (size of park, visitor numbers, special features, overview of important projects)
- Lists of sponsors and donors
- Public relations contact person (include business card)
- Bios of staff and/or board members
- Photographs (8x10 or 5x7 black & white or color glossy): photo of a new facility, or current headshot of director or senior staff
- Calendar of programs or special events
- Copies of noteworthy articles and editorials
- Information can also be provided on a disk or CD

*Where do you distribute press kits?*

- Upon request from reporters, editors, potential donors and board members
- Have a media kit prepared for all of the attendees at press conferences
- Bring a few along to any media interview
- Send off a kit ahead of time when pitching a specific story to a reporter
- You may want to bring current kits to board meetings
- Do not forget to follow up with contacts when sending out media kits! This will insure they have received them and allow an opportunity for them to ask any questions

*Other items to consider including:*

- Map of park
- Agency Annual Report
- Program brochure
- Facility brochure
- Additional photographs
- Aerial photos
- Directions to event
- Parking pass (if needed)
- Press pass (if needed)

## **Sample Cover Letter:**

### **Latino Media Kit**

Dear Editor,

The Census 2000 figures show that Latinos are the largest minority group in the state. Because of this, it is imperative that the media not only be inclusive of the Latino community, but also cover it in all of its diversity.

We encourage you to run stories and profiles about the Latino community. We have developed a resource kit in partnership with several Latino organizations around the state.

We recognize the contributions of the Latino community and have begun to work in Spanish language and Latino media. We held media symposiums that discussed images of Latinos.

We encourage you to use this media resource kit to develop stories about the Latino community, and hope that the information will serve as a resource in your research throughout the year and beyond.

If you should have any questions about issues and events in the Latino community, please do not hesitate to call any of the people on the enclosed media contact list. For specific questions about the media resource kit, please contact \_\_\_\_\_, at (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_, or by e-mail at \_\_\_\_\_.

### ➤ *Backgrounder and Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)*

A backgrounder is a one or two page (sometimes longer) document that tells an organization's unique story. It features key information - a brief history, core products and services, industry information and executive staff. It should be written in a factual, informative way that engages the press without being "hype".

Frequently Asked Questions documents are created to answer many general questions about an organization's mission, vision, goals, business-related questions, and/or questions about a particular product or service. FAQ's should be made available to the public, and are often posted on corporate web sites. The main purpose of FAQ documents is to answer many of the questions a potential customer, partner, investor, media contact or even employee may have.

### ➤ *Biography ("bio")*

A biography ("bio") is a brief one page document profiling a member of the company's executive team or senior management. It is essential the bio is updated regularly and includes the executive's correct name, title and general area of responsibility for the company. The format should utilize the "news paragraph" style, listing the most recent information first and least-recent information (e.g. academic degree or affiliation) last.

## Sample Biography:

### **MIKE CHRISMAN**

Secretary for Resources

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Date:



A fourth generation Californian and San Joaquin Valley resident, Mike Chrisman was named California Secretary for Resources by Governor Schwarzenegger in November 2003. As a member of the governor's cabinet, Secretary Chrisman serves as his chief advisor on issues related to the states' natural, historic, and cultural resources.

In leading the Resources Agency, Secretary Chrisman oversees policies, activities, and a budget of \$6.4 billion and 16,000 employees in 25 departments, commissions, boards and conservancies. The issues run the natural resources gamut from conservation, water, fish and game, forestry, parks, energy, coastal, marine and landscape.

Prior to his appointment Secretary Chrisman served as Region Manager for Southern California Edison Company from 1996 to 2003. There he managed all phases of company and customer business, and the political and civic activities in Edison's San Joaquin Valley service area. He served as Undersecretary for the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) from 1994 to 1996 during which time he provided leadership in the development and implementation of sound policy for the state's agricultural industry and consumers. Secretary Chrisman's lifelong commitment to family ranching proved invaluable in the development of policies to sustain the Central Valley's economy.

In 1997, Governor Pete Wilson appointed Secretary Chrisman to the California Fish and Game Commission, where he also served as Chairman of the Wildlife Conservation Board. From 1991 to 1994 he served at the Resources Agency as Deputy Secretary for Operations and Legislation in the Wilson Administration. He was staff director of the Assembly Republican Caucus in 1991, advising members of the Legislature on environmental, water and agriculture issues. From 1986 to 1991, Secretary Chrisman served as Chief of Staff to former Assemblyman Bill Jones, managing the Central Valley member's State Capitol and district offices and specializing in agriculture, water and environmental issues.

Throughout his career, Secretary Chrisman has been known as the 'go to' person to facilitate solutions for local and regional challenges. Often behind the scenes, he has been responsible for incalculable positive impacts throughout the region in many far-reaching ways. His commitment to the agriculture industry combined with his unwavering passion for protecting the state's natural resources, has established the foundation from which he has been able to provide bold and compassionate environmental leadership.

Secretary Chrisman holds a Master of Science degree in Agricultural Education and a Bachelor of Science degree in Agronomy and Plant Science from the University of Arizona. He is an owner and partner of Visalia's Chrisman Ranches, a family ranching and farming business in Tulare County.

He and his wife Barbara have two children and five grandchildren.

➤ *Media Contact List*

It is important to keep an accurate, up-to-date database of influential media. Any information sent to a publication needs to be addressed to a specific journalist or editor; otherwise it will likely be discarded. Public relations are based on relationship building with the media, so it is important not only to keep accurate records, but to actually get to know the key journalists and media that cover your company or industry.

**Sample Media Contact List:**

**Publication/Media** The City Times  
**Media Type** Newspaper  
**First** Sue  
**Last** Smith  
**Title/Beat** Editor/Workplace  
**Address** 92 5th Street, LA, CA 98002  
**Phone** 555/914-6969  
**Fax** 555/914-6900  
**E-mail** Sues@ct.com  
**Comments** Best to contact Sue via e-mail

**Publication/Media** KING TV  
**Media Type** Broadcast TV  
**First** John  
**Last** Apple  
**Title/Beat** Producer  
**Address** 3400 7th St., City, ST. Zip  
**Phone** 555/404-8974  
**Fax** 555/212-6444  
**E-mail** John@ktv.com  
**Comments** John works the weekend shift

➤ *Press Conferences/Briefings/Tours*

A press conference is a formal event held by an organization that members of the press are invited to cover. Press conferences are used to communicate an important, newsworthy announcement and may include 50-100 members of the press. The key element of any press conference is the announcement itself. It must be significant enough to attract press, and newsworthy enough to secure actual coverage of the event. The location of a press conference is also critical – it must be a large enough room to allow for a large press contingent, camera equipment and it must be "well

wired" with numerous power outlets and microphones to ensure press can ask questions, take photographs and film the event easily. Setting up a press conference on site for a park opening, or to showcase new land annexation, involves a different set of logistics. Renting or bringing in truckloads of folding chairs, a portable stage, microphones, and electrical generators should be added to your list of logistics.

News briefings, on the other hand, are more informal and may only include a handful of journalists. The goal of a news briefing is to inform the press about a general strategy, introduce them to a new product, solicit their feedback on a particular program, or announce the appointment of a new district administrator.

A press tour is designed to take a particular announcement or program "on the road" to key press. Companies arrange 1:1 or group meetings with journalists and then conduct the interviews in their offices or at a designated location. Most often, press tours are designed by location (e.g., Northern California and Southern California) to maximize travel time. A tour would be an appropriate strategy to show the media a new development, or the need for repairs on well used facilities.

*Things to consider when making a decision to hold a press conference:*

- It is important to consider if simply sending out a press release is sufficient, or if a press conference is really necessary. Is it newsworthy? Are there facts and information to reveal, like a high profile event or exciting new service? Calling a press conference for routine issues or to get free publicity may damage credibility and could affect turnout at future events, so make sure press conferences are held only if absolutely necessary.
- Press conferences provide a forum to address a group of reporters at the same time.
- Assign a key representative with good public speaking skills to make an announcement. This representative could be a communications specialist, a director, or anyone else on the agency's staff trained to handle high level media relations. It is also a good idea to have a prominent community member speak at the press conference. Do you have good speakers? For example, if announcing a new community center it would be great to have the mayor or local council member attend and make a statement at the press conference.
- Who to invite: Media, board members, key staff, key community members, non-profit partners, chamber of commerce, local and state leaders, if applicable.

*Press Conference Logistics:*

- Schedule the press conference for the morning if possible. This gives reporters time to file their stories
- Make sure to find adequate space to hold all the media and community members
- Facility chosen has sufficient parking for all attendees
- Facility may have a stage/display area for speakers/podium
- A banner can be set up behind the podium for branding as signage and is always a valuable promotional tool
- Adequate seating and space for media and camera equipment

- Staff for the event can be assigned roles as emcee, speakers, and greeters to hand out press kits
- E-mail/Fax media alert and directions a few days in advance and for a good media turnout, call individual reporters and editors to pitch the event
- Prep speakers for press questions before the event to make sure they are prepared
- Rehearse the presentation and check equipment for all technical problems and make sure all the correct equipment is set up and ready to go
- Set up a sign-in table near the entrance for a record of all the attendees
- Have enough press kits pre-stuffed with current press release and have extras available
- Consider having water, coffee, soda or food available if early morning
- Set clear objectives and keep everything on track. Keep announcements simple so as not to confuse the reporters and make sure there is one clear message theme
- Create a checklist of key tasks and details, including who is responsible for each item

➤ *Letters-to-the-Editor, Opinion-Editorials (op-ed)*

Another way to use newspapers to promote an organization or initiative and to get an announcement out is to write letters to the editor. Opinion pieces and editorials or Op-Eds signed by top management or board members are very useful.

**Sample Op-Ed:**

**Guest Column: It's no longer business as usual; Real progress must be made to save the Delta**

**Stockton Record – 2/18/07**

**By Mike Chrisman, California Secretary for Resources, Visalia**

The Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta touches the life of every Californian every day.

It supports vital energy, transportation, communications and water facilities and important agricultural, recreational and cultural resources.

It's also in peril.

Formed by the Sacramento and San Joaquin rivers, the Delta is truly one of the state's - and the nation's - great natural treasures.

It's home to 700 native species of plants, fish and animals. It's crossed by hundreds of gas lines, six highways, five high-voltage lines and three railroads.

It's the hub of the state's major water supply systems.

The Delta is held together by 1,100 miles of fragile levees. The threat of flooding exists throughout the year, not just during the winter storm season.

Many of the Delta's islands now lie below sea level, sinking lower every time a plow passes and the peat soil is carried away on the Delta breeze.

Californians made an investment on Nov. 7 to repair levees and improve flood protection, supporting the first phase of Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger's Strategic Growth Plan.

This will provide \$4 billion to keep Californians safe from flood and to protect habitat and water supply.

I'm working with the governor on a second phase of this important plan.

If placed on the ballot, voters will have the opportunity to allocate nearly \$6 billion to enhance the Delta's sustainability, build new water reservoirs, increase the state's water supply and fund water conservation efforts.

There's a real, pressing need for more investment.

In addition to flood risk, the Delta faces significant changes to its ecosystem. The number and variety of fish have declined dramatically over the past five years.

The desire for affordable housing close to urban centers means increased development is coming - changing the character of this unique and historic place.

In order to address the Delta's needs, the governor signed an executive order creating the Delta Vision plan.

Last week, he issued this challenge to the newly formed Delta Vision Blue Ribbon Task Force: develop a durable vision for sustainable management of the Delta and a strategic plan for its implementation.

This task is no small undertaking. Competing interests have battled over the Delta's resources for decades.

The governor carefully chose the seven individuals who will work during the next 18 months, under the leadership of Chairman Phil Isenberg, to ensure they make a significant difference.

In addition, a 40-member group of Delta stakeholders soon will be named.

They also will play an integral role in representing the San Joaquin Valley's interests statewide.

Californians have learned volumes about the Delta over the past several decades.

What we know today, from the impact of global climate change to moving water through the Delta for a growing population, has come from research, such as the Public Policy Institute of California study released last week.

It also has come from work done by local, state and federal agencies, academic institutions and stakeholders.

Members of the task force and Delta group will draw on this expertise - and request additional research as necessary - to arrive at recommendations that are innovative and capable of being implemented.

Common among the task force's members is a strong ability to understand and solve complex problems, starting from the premise that "business as usual" will not - and cannot - work in the Delta any longer.

Californians must protect this natural system, for the sake of our drinking water and our economy.

Delta Vision is all about finding that balance.



## ➤ *Writing a Feature Story*

A lot of what's on the front pages of a newspaper is information that needs to be told right away, or it will be dated and lose its relevance. Not so with a feature story. A feature is meant to be evergreen. It can have an indefinite shelf life to enable it to be used when needed by the media, and does not rely on when it is sent out. Features are often about how we live, love, and learn. Items on food, travel, pets, home improvement and health, for example, are among the many topics that lend themselves well to features.

However, features can also be used by small businesses and entrepreneurs for business-to-business messages or when a consumer focus is not applicable. Many trade and technical magazines look for features that tell a compelling story or provide factual guidance, and do not read like an advertisement.

Indeed, a feature needs to emphasize information over outright promotion. You achieve your promotion by being a source of good information.

### *General Guidelines for a Feature Story*

- Look for a feature angle that will interest readers
- Talk to the source, uncover the story
- Identify up to three types of editors you want to target
- Keep most paragraphs to under 30 words
- Make the feature useable verbatim if cut after the second paragraph
- Write in laymen's language. Avoid superlatives, jargon and excessive mentions of a brand name.

### *Headlines*

Write a headline that tells the story. This will be all editors will have to go on to decide whether they will open up the story and consider it for publication or broadcast. The aim is to have copy used verbatim. If it reads like an ad, it will not get used.

### *First paragraph*

Expand upon the same story told in the headline in 30 words or less. Keep all your paragraphs short, using simple, declarative sentences. Do not digress. If you use adjectives, make them count.

### *Second paragraph*

- Back up your story with supporting information
- Identify who is telling the story
- Add toll free number and phone number in parentheses
- Add e-mail address
- Add full Web site address enabling a hyperlink

### *Third paragraph*

Use a humanizing or compelling quote from a spokesperson you want interviewed and who can lend authority to the story.

### *Fourth paragraph*

Transition into details and explain how the project or program works, or provide tips and advice.

### *Fifth paragraph*

Support the story with a third-party endorsement or a quote. Alternatively, you can provide additional details or biographical information, if necessary.

### *Sixth paragraph*

Provide context to your story by including the fact or statistic that demonstrates the importance of the story.

### *Last paragraph*

Tell them how to get what you are selling. Repeat purchase information such as toll-free number or your agency's web address.

### *Editor's note*

Indicate availability of staff for interviews, photos, video, b-roll, or product demo materials.

## **Newsletters<sup>5</sup>**

Staying in touch with your constituents and interested members of the public by way of a regular electronic or paper newsletter is a valuable PR tool. It enables you to give them the latest information about your programs and events, promote new ideas, and acknowledge recipients of awards, grants and promotions. Use the newsletter to announce donations, board appointments, and upcoming special events or recreation programs.

However, your newsletter competes for attention with television, the Internet, newspapers, magazines and other newsletters. Effective newsletters hit the recycle bin in days – instead of in seconds. To command attention, they must deserve respect. In other words, effective newsletters:

- look suited to their publisher
- are easy to identify and remember
- make reading easy
- are interesting
- are current
- include phone numbers, web and e-mail addresses
- have consistent branding (more on branding in Chapter 5)

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<sup>5</sup> Newsletter Sourcebook, p. 6, p. 22

The way your publication looks tells readers about you. Type, colors, paper and other design elements work together to convey your image, whether it's conservative, friendly or authoritative.

Readers judge your organization not only by the information you present, but also by how you present that information. Trendy clip art may not suit a newsletter from a bank. Primary colors work well for a day care publication. Large typography serves readers of a retirement newsletter. Make sure that your graphic look fits your organization.

In addition to shaping readers' judgment, your graphic look helps readers identify your publication at a glance. Keep your nameplate, format and especially the colors you use the same, issue after issue, to ensure instant recognition. Also, make sure your newsletter design harmonizes with business forms, letterhead and other documents produced by your organization. Consistent design builds instant recognition and dependable recall. Be sure to place your agency's logo in a prominent place. The newsletter is a visual example of your agency's brand (more on Branding in Chapter 5).

Research identifies the places readers see first in your newsletter. Readers look first at the front page, then the back page, and finally, the inside pages. Therefore put your most important information on page one.

When readers look at the inside pages, they see the right hand pages first, and then the left hand pages. Readers start reading at the upper left of the spread, but they glance at the right page first. Use the upper half of the right page for your calendar or important visual elements such as graphs, illustrations, photos or maps.

When readers look at a page, they see, in order: photos and illustrations; captions; headlines; pull quotes; subheads; and text. Use photos and illustrations to tell your story, not just as decoration or filler. And make those captions count. Put the essence of the story in the caption that readers see even before headlines.