

Implementing MRRP: Advertising and Media Relations



Advertising and media coverage is an important part of any program, especially ones that require public support and participation. Success of MRRP is dependent on heightened public awareness of monofilament recycling, and using the local media is an effective means to accomplishing this goal. Anglers and the general public need to know how fishing line can be recycled so that they can choose to participate. Volunteers need to be alerted of cleanup events and then acknowledged for their efforts. This summary will provide some suggestions for improving media relations and getting your program story covered.

Advertising

Paid advertising is expensive. Thirty-seconds of television airtime can cost from hundreds to thousands of dollars (or millions during the Superbowl) and it is necessary to repeat the advertisement multiple times on many channels to reach your target audience. Radio announcements can be effective way to reach a targeted audience if a demographic reveals that most of that audience listens to one particular station. Advertising in the newspaper can be very effective and slightly less expensive. Other ideas for paid advertising include billboards, buses, and movie theatres but the best method for advertising MRRP is through free press coverage.

Press Releases

Write regular press releases about MRRP initiation. Program startup is a perfect time to introduce the media by sending out announcements that describe the new and innovative program. Describe the problem, send images and statistics, and include contact information. Try to come up with an exciting by-line to catch their attention. The press release should be relatively short and include a public interest story. Send the press release to the major newspaper(s) as well as the community newspapers. Check your local newspaper's website to see if they have a suggested format for press releases. Some suggestions for writing a good press release include:

- ❖ Appeal to the public love of wildlife by including descriptions and images of entangled dolphins, manatees, and turtles.
- ❖ Include a story about a local character such as an angler, politician, or cleanup volunteer who is dedicated to the program.
- ❖ Report your story as "Breaking News" that no one else is aware of yet.

- ❖ Clearly explain what the program hopes to achieve and what you need from the public. Include contact information and a website address.
- ❖ Format the press release so that it is visually appealing - double-spaced and at least 12 point font. Make sure the press release is no more than 1-1 ½ pages long with additional resources attached as needed.
- ❖ Make sure the press release has a headline and names of people they can quote.
- ❖ Include appropriate references to partners and others who deserve recognition.
- ❖ Send the press release at least ten days prior to an event.

Sample Press Releases

NEWS (OR PHOTO) RELEASE

TO:	Appropriate newspaper, section or editor.
FROM:	You
RE:	One or two sentences summarizing the story you are suggesting; event you would like a reporter or photographer to cover; or other purpose of release
TIME/DATE:	Specific time and date of event
LOCATION:	Specific location of event
WHY:	Reason for the story or event, and why it merits media coverage
CONTACT:	Name and phone number of someone the news editor or reporter can contact for more information or quotes. Be sure to include daytime and evening phone numbers.

Media Relations

When developing positive relationships with local media representatives, remember that their job is to write compelling stories, not to market your

particular program. If you don't know any reporters at your local newspaper, start by researching those who cover the environmental or community interest columns. Read the newspaper and assess the styles and interests of the different reporters and select the one that you think would be most interested in MRRP. It may be the outdoor editor or the sports reporter who has the most interest in the program. Does the newspaper have a fishing columnist? Contact the appropriate person directly either on the telephone or via email to initiate communication before sending the press release. Reporters are always looking for good stories, so try to make it interesting or they may make it interesting for you.

The following suggestions may help you to develop positive, trusting media relationships and get your story covered:

- ❖ Don't fall in love with your press release story angle, because the reporter may change the angle of the story altogether. Generally any story is better than no story and there is a good chance that the program name and concept will persist.
- ❖ Answer all the reporter's questions, regardless of if you think they fit within your story or not. Don't hide anything, because the reporter will find out and report it without your chance to comment.
- ❖ Write your own quotes so that they are clear and understandable (and spelled correctly).
- ❖ Try not to direct the reporter away from a potentially heated or controversial issue. Admit to the negative issue, provide your input as positively as possible, and move on quickly. Denying the reporter information can ruin a trusting relationship.
- ❖ Become a good source of information. Contact your media representative regularly with other news and stories. Invite them on field trips and to volunteer appreciation events.
- ❖ Send an emotional photograph and caption to one of the newspaper's photographers for a short "snapshot" of coverage.
- ❖ Don't settle for the journalists at hand. Besides newspaper reporters, search for other regional or subject authors who may cover the story in magazines or books. Sports writers, children's' book writers, travel writers, wildlife writers, and outdoors writers are other potential sources of coverage.
- ❖ Buy the areas' media guide and develop your own media list.

- ❖ Send an acknowledgement of appreciation to the boss of the journalist that writes a particularly good story about your program.

Unfortunately, the media industry tends to turn over journalists quickly and it may be necessary to start establishing relationships with new reporters regularly. Don't give up! Cultivating a trusting relationship with the local newspaper is the best way to keep your program in the public eye. The challenge is to keep the stories interesting.