

TEXAS PARKS AND WILDLIFE

media communication guide



media communication guide

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Communications Division
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News and Information Branch

Each of these sources may provide additional information which may be useful in the area of media relations. A special thanks goes to all TPWD field and headquarters personnel who assisted in any way in the publication of this document.

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Introduction

Why Media Communication?

It is difficult to work for a public organization like Texas Parks and Wildlife and not have some contact with the media. Whether you are biologist, game warden or park manager, chances are that you will face a news reporter at some point in your career. While media relations are a part of our job, surveys have indicated that most of us have had little to no training in this area. The following pages will provide general information and tips to help guide you through your interaction with news reporters. The guide is written so that field employees of any TPWD division can use it. The words park, facility, site or program are meant to be interchangeable with those in your work area, whether it be a fish hatchery, wildlife management area or historical site. The guide is also meant to be a flexible, living document with updates, changes and additions to be added periodically on the TPWD WILDnet.

The Power of the Press

The term press refers to all types of newsgathering organizations and their employees, but you'll hear other terms — news media, journalists, and reporters — used almost interchangeably. The simple truth is this: no news organization cares about the label as much as the content. If you issue a news release or hold a news conference, you must have real news. If you have no news this time, you'll have no news coverage next time. But the time to think about a public affairs program, relationships with local or national news media or talk to interest groups is long before a crisis. You'll have serious incidents and lots of news media attention over the years, but if you've done your relationship building before the trouble hits, life will be easier. If you're just starting to build that relationship with the media, pay attention to how they do their job. It's the only way to understand what they do and how you might work well with them. Over the next several pages, we'll first introduce you to some of the ways reporters work, and ways that your working relationship with them can be improved. This guide is meant to provide general direction and guidance. Use it as a tool to help you with your relationship with the media. We'll also spend some time on writing, because regardless of the final form in which news comes to the public, it usually starts with the written word.

TPWD Communications Help and Training

This manual is meant to provide general guidelines to help you do as much of your own media communication as you wish. However, TPWD has an entire division full of experts ready and willing to help with your communication needs. The Communication Division is responsible for internal and external communications and marketing. Communication division staff develops and implements a coordinated communications strategy annually based on priority projects and initiatives. Media products include the TPWD Web site, the monthly *Texas Parks & Wildlife* magazine, a weekly PBS television series, the daily *Passport to Texas* radio program, video news reports and a variety of internal and external publications, video products and other public information items. Marketing initiatives include Big Time Texas Hunts, the Texas State Parks Pass and the conservation license plate series.

Coordinating with Austin Headquarters

Austin headquarters establishes official policy and messages on major issues. You should rely on your chain of command for the official word on major issues. If the media or the public arrive at your site before the official word does (it happens!), consult our tips on how to decline comment **without** saying “no comment” or generating bad feelings. Policy and messages are generally sent down through the chain of command via memos and e-mail, or in news releases and stories found in in-house media such as *This Week at Texas Parks & Wildlife*, *Tracks & Trails* and *Open Line*. These tools are excellent sources in providing approved information on timely topics. The Executive Director or Division Director may be the main point of media contact for sensitive issues such as legislative affairs. It would be wise to exercise caution with regard to legislative issues.

The Field Role

The field staff is the front line of communication in terms of direct contact with the public. In many instances, field employees are the most responsive to local concerns. Field staff are generally responsible for much of the following:

- Day-to-day communication with the local media on routine matters.
- Immediate response on local issues and emergencies. This usually requires personal judgment and quick coordination with chain of command.

- Feedback on local concerns are sent back up the chain of command to Headquarters leaders/staff.
- Give Headquarters staff a minimum of 48 hours to review press releases by e-mail if you plan to distribute the news releases outside your local area.

Training Classes

TPWD offers training to help better prepare employees to deal with news reporters and the media. The class not only provides an informative overview of how the media work but also provides on-camera mock interviewing and other training to help employees learn proven techniques. The training class should be arranged through chain of command to the Director of Communications.

Below is a partial list of current contacts in the TPWD Communication Division. A detailed list of Communication Division contacts, products and services is located in the appendix.

- **Director**

Lydia Saldaña, Division Director/Agency Spokesperson
 (512) 389-4557
 lydia.saldana@tpwd.state.tx.us
 Pager: (888) 732-9197

- **Publications**

Randy Brudnicki, TPW Magazine
 (512) 912-7001
 randy.brudnicki@tpwd.state.tx.us

- **Marketing Services**

Darcy Bontempo, Branch Chief
 (512) 389-4574
 darcy.bontempo@tpwd.state.tx.us

- **News & Information**

Tom Harvey, Branch Chief
 (512) 389-4453
 tom.harvey@tpwd.state.tx.us
 Mobile: (512) 565-3679

- **Creative Services**

Tim Peterson, Creative Director
 (512) 389-4567
 tim.peterson@tpwd.state.tx.us

Aaron Reed, Weekly News Digest Editor
 (512) 389-8046
 aaron.reed@tpwd.state.tx.us

- **Media Productions**

Richard Roberts, Branch Chief
 (512) 389-4796
 richard.roberts@tpwd.state.tx.us

section one

communicating through the media

1.1 Who's Who and What Do They Do

There are three traditional media — print (newspapers and magazines), radio and television. The newest medium is the Internet, combining aspects of all three of its forerunners. Because each medium has its own strengths and weaknesses in terms of the kinds of stories it tells and the kinds of audiences it attracts, each has its own needs. You look at television. It's color, movement, sound, and it's usually brief. Therefore, television wants pictures with action. You listen to the radio, and radio news stories are usually very brief for local newscasts. Therefore, radio wants voices and sound, often obtained through phone interviews. You read newspapers and magazines. They want information that can be presented well in writing and in graphics such as charts or photographs. The print media can handle more complex issues and more details than broadcasters, although the trend at many newspapers is to run shorter stories than in the past. The Internet is a mixed bag. Many on-line news services are simply the electronic version of stories that have appeared in print or have been broadcast. Internet services can make pictures, sound and video available, and they can "publish" in the same short time frame that you're used to with broadcasters.

Who's Who in Television

- **News Director** – This person oversees the news department, handles the administration and sometimes runs newsgathering.
- **Assignments Editor** – This person will maintain the future file story calendar and decides what gets covered and who will cover it.
- **Producer** – Responsible for all the content of a particular newscast. This person may write many of the smaller stories.
- **Reporters** – This is the person you will see most often. This person travels to the field to interview sources and gather information from you and me. They will write and voice a taped report known as a package.

- **TV Photographer** – They will shoot video for the news story. They often cover smaller stories without a reporter. The producer will then write a voice over story to go over the video.

Who's Who at the Newspaper

The following is a list of newspaper personnel at a typical newspaper. Remember that larger newspapers have more personnel and thus more specialized functions. At smaller newspapers, employees tend to share job duties. It is worth the time to get to know the people at your local media outlets, especially those most likely to cover your stories.

- **Owner/publisher** – May serve as the editor of smaller newspapers.
- **Editor** – For large dailies, this is the top news executive/administrator. For small weeklies, editor may do everything including reporting.
- **State Desk Editor** – News of statewide interest.
- **City Desk or Metro Editor** – Local or regional news.
- **Feature/Lifestyle, Travel Editor** – Many articles about state parks and nature-based tourism are found here.
- **Editorial Page Editor** – The only section where the newspaper is supposed to express its opinion about current events.
- **Sport and Outdoors Editor** – Hunting and fishing, fish kills and boater safety stories are often covered here, as well as park and youth outreach events.
- **Reporters** – For each department that's important to you, try to develop good relationships with reporters **before** a crisis. You may deal with these staff members more than any other.
- **Photo Editor**

Who's Who on Radio

Like television and newspaper, radio personnel will vary with the size of the market.

- **Station Manager** – Directs the overall operation of the station.
- **News Director** – In charge of locally produced news, may also serve as radio reporter.
- **Radio Reporter** – Conducts interviews for news stories.
- **PSA Director** – Coordinates public service announcements for on-air reading.
- **Disc Jockey** – Will often read the public service announcements on the air.
- **Station Office Manager/Receptionist** – This person may be in charge of getting your news story or PSA to the right person.

1.2 The Written Word

Still Rules

Although readership is shrinking, newspapers reach a large portion of the population. Newspapers deal in information and substance. One of the best ways to convey information about your site or facility is to write it down. The telephone is no substitute for the written word. Reporters and editors in the news media will have the final say on what an article or broadcast says, but you can (and should, in most cases) provide written information to the reporter. This is because a reporter often covers several stories in a day, usually in a hurry. The reporter's expertise and background may have nothing to do with your park or program issues, and with unfamiliar topics it's hard to learn the key facts and write them down at the same time. The more you can put in writing — in the form of a press release, a fact sheet, or an executive summary of a large document — the less chance there is your words will be accidentally misreported. Remember that print coverage is thorough and many newspapers, especially larger ones, can handle complex analysis. You'll still spend considerable time on the phone with reporters, but offer to send the key information in writing via fax or e-mail. Reporters will rarely turn you down. Writing down key facts — especially numbers and statements that need to be carefully worded — will help you organize your thoughts, too, even if you just use the page to refer to during an interview. Putting information in writing also gives you a record of what you've said, and might come in handy for future interviews.

1.3 Preparing News Releases

You may wish to draft news releases that you will distribute after approval. When considering a news release, first make sure you're the right person to be putting it out. Is the subject matter something more appropriate for the Regional Director to release? Or the Division Director? Regardless, if you are producing a news release with statewide relevance, including news you plan to distribute outside your local area, TPWD guidelines call for you to run it by one of the news staff at headquarters first. They will have ideas about how to improve the news release and may be able to help sell your story to news reporters. (See **How to Submit Draft News Releases for Review** on page 7.) Often, state parks and local programs will send news releases to the weekly newspapers, local outdoor editors and others in their immediate geographic vicinity. The news staff at headquarters can distribute your story state wide and post it on the TPWD Web site, if it has statewide relevance. They also have connections with larger market media that are tougher to approach.

How to Submit Draft News Releases for Review

After you have a draft news release in writing, send it by e-mail to the News and Information Branch Chief and News Editor of the TPWD News weekly news digest. Copy your supervisor and your regional director on the e-mail. Try to give the news staff at HQ at least 48 hours in advance to review the release and reply with suggestions. Include with the draft release any plans or questions about how you plan to notify the media regarding the story. This process will do two things. First, it will give you some valuable feedback to help improve news release presentation and content. Second, depending on the story and the timing, it could get you some help from headquarters, including putting the story in consideration for statewide distribution and TPWD Web posting. Your e-mailed draft can also be forwarded to the TPW Magazine, TV series, radio series, and Video News Release program for consideration. For the names and e-mail addresses of appropriate HQ contacts, see the list of Communications Division personnel on page 3, or see Appendix 3 for a more detailed listing.

Remember that editors of newspapers and magazines and broadcast assignment editors have large trash cans and e-mail deleted folders where most news releases die. Those of us who in other lives have filled those trash bins day after day offer you the following guidelines on how to avoid the can. Here are the key elements of a good news release:

- **Newsworthiness.** No news is bad news.
- **Audience.** Don't send a release of purely local concern to a distant media outlet. A journal of historical research won't care about new traffic patterns at the park.
- **A good lead.** The lead is the first paragraph; if it isn't well done, it may be the last paragraph the editor reads. This is the most important part of the story because it is the portion that must tell the readers enough to make them want to read the rest of the article. The lead should convey compassion, importance and relevance. The lead should briefly sum up the essence of what the story is about and why it is news. The classic lead covers the Five Ws (who, what, when, where and why), which we will discuss in more detail later.
- **Good writing, content.** Smaller publications have less staff to write or rewrite material. If your release is well written, it may be printed with little editing or simply reprinted verbatim. If it needs great effort to rescue it, there's a good chance it will go to the trash.
- **Art.** Photographs, maps, charts and video will help interest an editor, assuming the quality is good and you're offering it to the right audience. Tell editors what opportunities there are for their staff to produce art, too.

1.4 News Release Format

Even if your news release incorporates all of the above suggestions, it still needs to be presented in a professional, orderly manner. Key format requirements include:

- **A contact person** (first and last name) should be named on every news release. The person should be readily available and able to answer questions on the subject of the release. **BE SURE** to include the media contact's telephone number which may be different than an information number for the general public. Include a mobile number if you might expect media calls on nights or weekends.
- **Date.** Always put a date on a press release. If it can be used at anytime, put "For Immediate Release." In rare circumstances, you might use a future date or time, for instance, "For Release Thursday, June 27," or more specifically, "For Release at 9 a.m., Thursday, June 27." Try to avoid future release dates or embargoes. They have certain uses, such as giving out the text of a speech in advance of an event, but remember you can't restrict the use of information that's available from another source. Also, reporters generally hate getting "embargoed" information, because most don't trust their competitors to delay a good story. Suffice it to say, embargoed stories are often a mess.
- **Headline.** Just like a newspaper story, every news release gets a headline. Use bold face capitals to set it off from the body of the story. A good headline is a pithy synopsis of the key point of a story. It does not take the place of part of the story, so repeat the headline information in the body of the story. Good headlines are not easy to write. In the appropriate circumstance, humor is a great attention getter. Poorly handled, you've embarrassed the Department; so think hard before you decide to get funny. A consistent format lends professionalism to your operation and to the Department.

Here's what we aim for in the format of the story:

- **Indent all paragraphs.** This is different than government letter writing style. Keep it short. News releases are the wrong vehicles for long, flowery writing. At best, an editor will throw out the flowers and keep the facts. At worst, the release just gets dumped. Leave room for editing. Double space the text and use wide margins even if you need to use more than one page. Use short paragraphs.
- **Take care with spelling and grammar.** You're a professional managing the crown jewels of Texas. What does it say about our care of resources if we can't run spell check or use a dictionary?

Run it by the TPWD news staff – After you draft your news release, consider e-mailing to TPWD News and Information for review. Even if it is a local story, they may have helpful tips to improve and help place the story, or may be able to distribute it for you. See Communications Division contact information on page 3 or Appendix 3.

For additional help see **Appendix 1 – TPWD Public Events Submission Form** and **Appendix 2 – Sample News Releases**.

1.5 What Makes Good Writing

News people are used to getting written news releases, either by mail, fax or e-mail. They regularly rewrite them to conform to their style and story length requirements. They don't mind if your composition isn't a prizewinner, but they do mind not getting all the facts. This section covers a mix of advice on writing style. The first paragraph is a summary of what the release is about. It's called the "lead." These first few lines, seldom more than three, determine if your release sinks or swims.

The Buffalo Soldiers reenactment, depicting African-American military culture of the Southwest, will be presented free to the public from 10:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Sunday (April 20) at Martin Creek State Park in Tatum.

This is a routine lead. But notice that it answers all the important questions: **who, what, why, where** and **when**. If answering those basics takes too many words, do one of two things: Break your text into two or more sentences, or leave detailed information for later in the release. Here are two versions:

WRONG: Three mountaineers, two from California and one from England, were injured in separate falls at Enchanted Rock Tuesday night, while three others from France were injured and rescued by Texas Parks and Wildlife after a third incident this morning, mountain rescue rangers at Enchanted Rock State Park reported.

Whew! Just try reading it aloud with one breath and you'll see you're in trouble. The next version is better:

BETTER: Three Enchanted Rock climbers have been hospitalized after falls and three other mountaineers are safe after being rescued by Park Rangers at Enchanted Rock State Park. Two California climbers were also injured in a fall at Echo Canyon on Tuesday at about 8 p.m. Thirty minutes later, a third climber from England was injured in a second, nearby fall. The rescue of three French climbers came today at about 9 a.m. after the group fell an estimated 120 feet at Turkey Peak.

When there are simply too many facts going on at once, but they are all related, you need to break it out piece by piece. It won't win any writing awards, but you will win friends among journalists by being very clear about what happened in each instance. While the fictional example is from climbing, any park with widespread flooding, multiple fires or simultaneous law enforcement troubles will recognize the pattern.

Newspapers and wire services have a writing style that's different from the government. The Associated Press Stylebook is the definitive guidebook for news style. If you often write news releases, it may be worth the money to have on your desk, but here, for free, are a few rules to remember:

- **Use the full proper name of a person, or of a thing, only once.** For instance, Park Manager Diana Kirby on first reference and Kirby on subsequent references. Use the World Birding Center on first reference, and "the birding center" or "the center" on second references. Try to avoid use of acronyms words such as EROCK, TFFC or WOB. Most publications only use abbreviations for very common things like FBI or AFL-CIO.
- **Most publications do not use courtesy titles. You shouldn't either.** So it's Horace Albright on first reference, and Albright (not Mr. Albright) on subsequent references. The exception is when saying Miss, Mr., or Mrs. (Ms. only if that is the known preference of the subject) will prevent confusion when several people have the same last name.
- **If you need to identify a medical doctor, then "Dr." is appropriate.** Folks with PhDs don't get to use Dr. (although you may want to note that a person has an advanced degree if it's relevant to the story).
- **Formal titles are capitalized before the name** (Wildlife Biologist David Sierra), **but lower case if they follow the name** (David Sierra, wildlife biologist). Titles are lower case if used without a name (The wildlife biologist will speak at noon.)
- **Spell out numbers nine and below and use numerals for numbers 10 or greater. Ages are always numerals.** Two boys, 11 and 14, tried to kayak the Guadalupe River at flood stage.
- **Don't say 11 a.m. in the morning. When else could it be?** It's either 11 a.m. (best) or 11 o'clock in the morning (not as good.) To avoid confusion, use noon and midnight and not 12 a.m. or 12 p.m. Publications of general interest don't use military time.

1.6 News Writing Tips

Every journalism student learns the Five Ws, the key points that should be covered in every news article in order to tell the complete story. The Five Ws are **who**, **what**, **when**, **where** and **why**, and some journalism instructors add an H, for **how**. These points are essential to cover the basic facts.

An example news lead:

Working with students from the Texas A&M University’s School of Architecture, the Inland Fisheries Division of Texas Parks and Wildlife Department today discussed design plans for a state-of-the-art fish hatchery and education center in Camp County.

Who – Inland Fisheries Division of Texas Parks and Wildlife; **What** – discussed design plans; **When** – today; **Where** – Camp County; **Why** – for a state-of-the-art fish hatchery and education center; **How** – working with students from the Texas A&M School of Architecture

In writing the lead for your story you should first get all your facts together and look them over. Decide what is most important (the reason it is newsworthy) and emphasize this in your lead. The lead paragraph gives the guts of the story but it also leaves some details unanswered. These are covered in succeeding paragraphs. Put the second most important facts in the second paragraph and continue putting information down in descending order of importance.

As you draft your news release you should consider the following:

- **Story Angles** – Each story may offer several approaches that appeal to different types of editors or news organizations.
- **The News Peg** – Learn to hang your story on a news “peg,” a related current issue or event. “Experience the real Jurassic Park at Dinosaur Valley State Park in Glenrose”
- **Quotes** – Break free of officious language and express in plain language what’s exciting about this story to you personally.
- **TPWD News Can Help** – After you have written a news release draft or have other background information on paper, contact the Communications Division’s News and Information Branch. They can help with your news release. See page 3 or Appendix 3 for Communications contacts list.
- **Alternatives to News Releases** – Phone calls and personal contacts can be effective in some situations. It is still important to have relevant details written down to provide background facts if a reporter gets interested in your topic.

1.7 What is News

The simplest definition is that news is information that is new and interesting. TPWD activities that can be classed as news are those that are of interest to people outside the agency. This includes a wide range of topics including: shrimp regulations, hunting/fishing rules, fresh water

pollution, or deer or turkey forecasts. Here are some other factors that may help determine the newsworthiness of your story.

- **Timeliness** – News is what is new. “TPWD Wildlife biologists warn that recent drought conditions may have negative impact on upcoming turkey season.”
- **Proximity** – A story is more likely to appear in areas where people will be affected by it. “Ice storm knocks out power in Northeast Texas State Parks.”
- **Exceptional quality** – This refers to how uncommon or extraordinary an event is.
- **Possible future impact** – Stories about subject that may eventually become a threat or a benefit to readers makes the story much more interesting. “Mercury levels decrease making fish safe to consume.”
- **Prominence** – Some stories are newsworthy because they involve well-known people or institutions. “Governor Perry to visit Texas State Railroad.”
- **Conflict** – Conflict is a magnet for news. There may be times when you are called on to be an expert in conflict situations. “Protesters rally against new shrimping regulations.”
- **The number of people involved or affected** – The more people likely to be affected by the event will help determine the newsworthiness of the event.
- **Consequence** – Some article focus on advice that people should follow to avoid a negative consequence. (boater safety, consumption advisory) “Fines for illegal hunting set to increase.”
- **Human interest** – People often find stories about other people interesting.
- **Pathos** – Seeing or hear stories about the misfortunes of others often elicit strong feelings or emotions. “Game Wardens help rescue stranded families during recent floods.”

1.8 Photographs and Captions

Good illustrations, especially photographs, are in high demand, especially among smaller publications. Larger publications may use your photographs, and even broadcasters may be interested in seeing what their video crew will find if they come to cover your story.

You can send pictures with every release, or add a “Photo Editor’s Advisory” at the end of the news release describing what’s available on film or video. Another option is scanning an image, printing it and including it with your release as a sample of what the news outlet can find when a crew comes to your site facility or program. Digital photos and computer JPEG files are very popular today as well. Almost every journalist working today has an e-mail address, and the most convenient way for most newspapers to receive photos today is JPEG (.jpg) files sent by e-mail or downloaded from the Web. Recommended resolution for scanned images is at least 200 dpi (dots

per inch) for newspaper publication, and 72 dpi for Internet use. The communication pros at Austin Headquarters can scan photos into computers and e-mail them to you directly for distribution or help distribute them for you. For big stories with multiple photos, maps or graphic files, the news staff in Austin can help post photo files on the TPWD Web site for media use. Even smaller rural papers are using digital files. Glossy magazines want the largest, highest resolution files. Digital cameras with a resolution of 1.3 mega-pixels or greater take excellent photos and have become more affordable. Be sure to use the highest resolution setting for your camera.

Here are the general steps to downloading your images to your computer with a smart card.

1. Preinstall your digital camera software.
2. Make sure the power on both the camera and computer is turned off before connecting.
3. Attach the serial cable (should come with camera) to the serial port on your computer.
4. Connect the computer cable to the computer connector on the camera.
5. Turn on the computer.
6. Start the digital camera software on the computer.
7. The computer software should then direct you on downloading all images to your computer.

Once your images are downloaded onto the computer, sending via internet as an e-mail attachment is simple.

1. Once connected to the internet, open your e-mail center as if to compose a message.
2. Enter the address of the recipient.
3. Find and click on the attachment button or icon (usually a paper clip).
4. Browse your computer hard drive until you find the pictures that you wish to send.
5. You may then attach them to your e-mail by clicking the attach button.
6. Be sure to explain the photos with a cutline and say why you are sending them to the recipient.

Quality should be your guide — a muddy or blurry picture will hurt interest in your story. As with written information, consider e-mailing your photos to news or photo pros at headquarters to get their advice on selecting images for media distribution.

Every publication on the planet uses pictures of people shaking hands. Not a single one of them likes doing it, but they run over and over because there's often nothing better. If you have a check presentation or a groundbreaking, think hard to give them something better than a line of people holding a giant check or standing there in suits holding shovels.

Now that you're thinking images, what format should you pursue? A few suggestions:

- **Photographs are not snapshots.** Don't use prints from instant cameras; get a real camera and have good prints made from 35mm film. Most wire services and papers can handle prints, negatives or slides in black and white or color. Or, as noted above, most media can now take digitized images, but resolution and file sizes vary for different media. If you know you're shooting for a particular publication, check with the editor first.
- **Timeliness is important.** If you can get color prints in an hour or color slides in a week, your choice in most cases will be prints.
- **Write complete captions for every photo or video sequence distributed.** Remember these points when writing a caption:
 - Never write a caption without seeing the picture.
 - Use complete names, spelled correctly.
 - List names in an identifiable order (left to right, top to bottom, etc.).
 - Fully identify the location and the time the picture was taken.
 - Ask yourself, "Does it fully identify what's going on?"
 - List a contact phone number on your caption. The press release and picture are likely to lead separate lives.

1.9 Distributing News Releases

The first rule to avoid the trash can is don't send trash. The second rule is don't bury your recipients in a paper or electronic blizzard. Use releases only when you have something worth taking an editor's time.

News release distribution used to be by mail or by hand. That's undergone a significant change in the last 10 years. Nevertheless, you've still got to figure out who gets the information and how. We'll assume that your audience is a fairly local one — that you're announcing new summer hours, not naming a new director.

Before you start compiling a media mailing list, do two things. First, make sure there isn't one already at your facility — someone may have done the work for you. Second, check with your Austin headquarters or regional office. The TPWD News and Information Branch in Austin has media lists for all parts of Texas and all media types. Also, your local or state press club is likely to have a directory of publications and broadcasters. Many times these are commercially available.

If you are starting from scratch, and you don't already know, find out what newspapers are sold around your community. Include weeklies and "shoppers" if they run local news. Then turn on the radio and find out who's doing local news. Do the same for television, and don't forget local cable systems — the number of cable stations is huge, and many outlets run some local news or feature programs. Next, compile a regional list. Make sure you've included the nearest wire service bureau offices, big city newspapers that might cover out of town issues, regional magazines or specialty publications (*Honey Hole* fishing magazine for instance).

Lastly, you'll want to have on hand the addresses and phone number for national travel editors, magazines, or networks that you've worked with in the past or who have expressed an interest in your site. If you want your mailing list to last a long time, you can mail the release to a job title, such as "City Editor," or "Assignment Editor." However, you will get more attention if you send it to a real person, although it takes time to keep your list updated with current names. In real life, most mailing lists are a mix of titles and names.

Today, almost every news outlet receives news by e-mail. For all but a few smaller outlets, the days of "snail mail" and fax are over. Avoid e-mail attachments unless you have photos or graphics to share (remember these can be posted on the TPWD Web site for media download).

A good media list option for TPWD employees is Microsoft Outlook. If you build your media database in Outlook, you can print hard copy mail labels, send faxes, and most important, send e-mail using a single database of contacts. Outlook can group "categories" or types of media contacts. It is also a format that is easily shared with other employees or outside partners. Contact the News and Information Branch for advice.

Our advice? The same old song — talk to reporters and see how you can best work together. Relationships are the key. If reporters or editors know you, they're more likely to read your e-mail.

1.10 Stock Information Needs

One helpful tip for writing a news release can be found in the Boy Scout motto:

Be Prepared

Your shelves can hold a variety of information materials at the ready that will help you work with the media and other groups. Here are four we recommend having:

- **The Fact Sheet.** This is a one-page sheet of basic information, done as a list of bullets. At a minimum, it will have the park's/program's age, size, budget, visitation, staffing levels, contact name and number, and brief descriptions of the primary natural and/or cultural features. If a particular program has substantial public interest, such as fish stocking at Sea Center Texas, a separate sheet may be needed.
- **Photographs.** Keep a collection of high-resolution scanned digital images to help you work with print media outlets, especially smaller publications. You do not need to have copies of every picture in the site or facility's collection ready to give out — a representative sample of the key resources, including TPWD personnel working with visitors, is what's needed. (See photograph guidelines in Section 1.8.)
- **The Press Kit.** This package is put together for the press, generally for a specific event. Communications Division pros usually put together press kits for big stories, often using information or materials provided by field employees. A media kit for a special event should include, at a minimum, a news release about the event, any fact sheets, the park brochure or park newspaper, background on speakers or program participants, and extra information reporters might need (a map with telephone and power outlets highlighted, for instance).
- **The Information Packet.** This differs from the press kit in that it is not developed for a specific event, and can be used for non-media recipients. These generally have more emphasis on visitor services, safety tips, accommodations, food service, partnerships, and community connections. They rarely have news releases or media-specific information. These packets are great for tour leaders, VIP trips, community outreach, etc.

section two

television

Television is the most powerful communications tool there is for reaching a wide audience and leaving a lasting impression. It is also the main source of information for most people.

No matter what your story or message, it probably can be told better and quicker through the magic of television. Conversely, no medium can make you look as bad if you're not prepared for the harsh reality of the lens. (Think about all those sweaty, nervous people you've seen on CBS's "60 Minutes" over the years.)

Dealing with electronic media, as opposed to the pencil press, requires some change in your thinking and planning. Print reporters are interested in details and substance. Electronic media want video of good visual action, first and foremost, and just highlights of a particular story in terms of information. TV crews much prefer to shoot their own video, but it can be helpful to provide raw video or "b-roll" on the topic in question. Consult with the Media Productions Branch at HQ; they have an extensive library of broadcast-quality video shot by TPWD on a wide range of topics and can provide dubs to TV news media at no cost for use in stories about our agency or its mission. Note that TV media need video in a broadcast-quality format, not the VHS home video format. Sony betacam was the standard for broadcast-quality field newsgathering for years, and is still usable across most of Texas, although newer digital video formats are now prevalent in most markets.

There are four primary types of TV news products:

- **Reader** – this is a 15-30 second story that is read by the announcer. Only the announcer is seen on the screen
- **Voice Over (VO)** – 15-30 second story showing video where the announcer "voices over" the pictures
- **VO/SOT** – 30-45 second voice over that includes a **SOUNDBITE** comment from a video interview
- **Package** – 1:00-1:30 minute taped report with reporter narration and soundbites edited over pictures

2.1 Think Visually

Television wants and needs visual action. They want to see the story unfold. Television news is driven by video footage, preferably footage with some movement. Sure, they might cover your “talking head” news conference or interview but they’re going to want other pictures (or B-roll, as TV editors call it) to illustrate the story.

So whether its breaking news, an interview or a news conference, have some places and pictures in mind that show what you’re talking about. Give the reporter or producer your suggestions. The more cooperation you show in helping them get what they want, the better they’ll treat you in the story.

2.2 Logistical Needs

For special events and news conferences, give some extra thought to staging to accommodate camera crews. Outside locations generally are best, with a park-like background.

Visitor centers, historic structures, or even entrance signs are also good backgrounds. Often crews do not have time to scout locations, so your knowledge of the park or facility will help them do a better job. Television crews will need extra time to set up equipment.

Reserve a section for television cameras and pick a position that does not look directly into the sun. If several camera crews are expected, work with TPWD News and Information Branch pros at headquarters for advice on how to rent a “mult-box,” a device that lets TV and radio crews connect their audio cables to the microphone or sound system.

Let the news crews park their trucks as close as possible to the action. Don’t suggest any five-mile hikes — the gear gets very heavy. If parking is limited, have trucks come early and unload and repark, and then return after the event. If TV stations bring in live trucks to cover a major event, they may need to make long cable runs away from the main event. They’ll need to have cable troughs or similar safety measures to avoid people tripping over cables if there is pedestrian traffic in the area. If you anticipate these situations, you should consult early on with TPWD News and Information Branch pros at headquarters.

section three

radio

Radio is an audio medium — you hear it, but you don't see or handle it. Therefore, the words you use are critical because they convey a large portion of the message. Radio represents a primary morning information source for many Americans. Because there are different types of formats and play lists for stations, radio has a distinctly segmented audience (rock, country, news/talk etc.). Few radio stations are serious about the news but some will have a News Director in charge of locally produced news. Some stations will run network news but no locally produced news. Many radio stations get their news story ideas from the newspaper.

If you're being interviewed, the rules are much like television. You want a clear message in mind, and you want to be brief. Like television, reciting long strings of numbers will let your listeners drift off.

Many radio interviews take place over the phone. Don't use your speakerphone. The sound quality is poor and background noise is a problem. Also avoid portable or cell phones for the same reason.

Radio interviews on the phone — whether live or taped — are often comfortable because you can look at notes or put your feet up on the desk. But don't get too comfortable and ramble. Neither should you sound like you're reading off a press release.

With in-person interviews, the reporter will take care of where the microphone's located. You only need to concentrate on speaking clearly and concisely.

Radio reporters who come to your park are also likely to want some background sound. Depending on the story, this might be visitors talking, an employee giving an interpretive talk, birds calling, the sounds of hammers working on the new visitor center, or fire sirens heading to the burning woods. These sounds are how radio reporters paint pictures; they are the radio equivalent of a photographer's work.

3.1 Public Service Announcements (PSAs)

Radio and TV stations generally broadcast a few public service announcements or public calendar items for non-profit groups and government agencies.

This can be a good way of getting publicity for an event, but before you go to the work of putting together PSAs, make sure the stations will use them if possible. Advance publicity is not easy to get.

Typical PSAs are 30 seconds or less. Write it as you would speak it — in 30 seconds you'll say about 80 words. Written PSAs are usually read by radio station disc jockeys.

Check with stations on how far in advance they want to receive PSA copy; five weeks is a typical lead-time. Also chat with the person who's in charge of PSAs. Most stations receive far more copy than they can use. A personal contact can help your item reach the airwaves. Some of the larger market radio stations will have a PSA Director or a Community Relations Director, an important contact if you want to get your item aired.

PSA copy must be clearly marked with start and stop dates. This tells the announcers when the message needs to air and when to stop running it.

You will almost always produce a timed script rather than an actual audiotape. The latter are expensive to produce, and you probably don't have the quality equipment to do it right.

If you do want to produce a major PSA campaign, contact the TPWD Communications Division (see page 3 or Appendix 3 for contacts list). The agency has audio and video production capability.

section four

interviews

Sooner or later, most park officials, biologists, game wardens, technicians, scientists and employees with similar high-profile roles are interviewed, with varying degrees of frequency — and success. The advice below works for any topic and any medium, whether print or broadcast, but interview sins will be particularly noticeable on television. All employees can use this information whether discussing red tide and pollution or public hunts and kid fishing tournaments.

4.1 Basics

Know Your Subject! Know Your Subject! Know Your Subject!

Reporters are rarely specialists. Good ones will do some research before an interview, but even those will have little knowledge of TPWD operations, or the reasons for the existence of a particular facility or program. You, on the other hand, have only superficial knowledge of their trade. It is your job to make certain the reporter understands what you are talking about.

If you know the subject matter of the interview in advance, it's helpful to jot up to three bullet statements on a card to focus on the main points you want to make. Getting your message firmly in mind will reduce nervousness and keep your responses more succinct.

You may hear terms such as “off the record,” “on background” and “not for attribution.” These are used to describe an interview, or portion of an interview, where the information given will not appear in print, or will not be attributed to an individual. Our advice is to avoid these techniques, period. The surest way to avoid being quoted about something you don't want on the public record is to avoid saying it.

Don't do interviews for an ego message. During an interview, your job is to explain TPWD programs, policies, and plans. Unless you are the subject of a personal profile —which sometimes happens with new personnel in key assignments or those departing such positions — your preference in china patterns or love for baseball trivia is not appropriate. Your role is spokesperson for the park, site or program and for Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. It doesn't even matter if your name appears in the finished story.

Always tell the truth! Lies are trouble. If you are caught, the media have two stories instead of one. Their first story is the truth. The second is your effort to avoid the truth. The second may become bigger than the first. One poorly understood fact is that the public and the media do understand human frailty. They don't expect you to be perfect. An admission of error is rarely important news — unless it is preceded by a denial of error.

If you don't know the answer to a question, say so. Even experts need to refresh their memories. But get the answer as soon as possible. If circumstances permit, get your staff to come up with an answer while you continue the interview.

Every reporter has a deadline. The daily media have daily deadlines. If a broadcast reporter must file a story at 4 p.m. to get on the 6 o'clock news, don't delay the interview until 3:30. The reporter needs time to return to the station, edit tape, and sometimes check details with you by phone. When we don't give the media enough time to do their job, it increases the chance of an incorrect story that will reflect badly on us.

Even magazines have deadlines. Just because a story won't be published for six weeks, don't assume the reporter has six weeks to write it. Magazines often stop taking material weeks before the publication date. The rest of the time is taken up by printing, layout, design, and editing — all beyond the reporter's control.

Use the **M-E-S-S-A-G-E** formula when conducting an interview.

- **Memorize** – three key points or messages.
- **Enthusiasm** – show positive excitement.
- **Stick to the Facts** – avoid emotional debate, be honest and straightforward.
- **Stay Focused** – stress the key message and try not to stray.
- **Admit** – if you do not know an answer admit it and arrange to provide it later.
- **Gullible** – don't be. Never go “off the record.” Don't say what you do not want repeated.
- **Explain** – have written background information ready, or know where you can get it quick.

4.2 The Enemy Within

Rarely will reporters try to trick or trap you. Their credibility is tied to their by-line in print or their performance on radio or television. They want to get the story right because failing to do so makes them look bad. They also don't want to antagonize you because they know they probably will have to deal with you on some future story.

The record is clear: most “misquotations” are the result of either of two failings on the part of the one interviewed. It is not a misquotation if you regretted saying it once you saw it in print. It is not misrepresentation if you failed to explain your point clearly, leaving the reporter to make an erroneous interpretation of what you meant.

Don’t let the reporter form your words for you. If the reporter says something like, “Then what you mean is,” pay attention! You are about to hear how you’ll be quoted unless you correct any mistake in the statement that follows. Likewise, if an interviewer tries to cut off your answer, be assertive! Say that you’d like to finish your answer before moving on to the next question. On rare occasions you’ll face a hostile interview. Your only option is to keep your cool and practice some damage control. If you can show a good reporter that he might be interpreting the facts wrong, or that he doesn’t have the facts at all, he might adjust his conclusions. This isn’t guaranteed. If you know a hostile story is in the works, practice answering the likely questions.

Do not repeat a hostile question. While you might not make lemonade out of lemons, you can move toward a positive response. For example:

Reporter: “Ellen, your campground staff is ignoring safe water rules and letting people get sick and maybe die, aren’t they?”

WRONG: “No, we’re not ignoring safe drinking water standards in our campgrounds, and I don’t think anybody is going to die.”

BETTER: “We’re very concerned about public health. Our campground water supply is safe. We test it daily, and we’ve begun an investigation into what else might be causing the illnesses we’ve had reported.”

Acknowledge there is a serious issue. Keep your message simple. (Given the complex resource and people management issues with which you deal, that’s not always going to be easy.)

Keep coming back to your message. **Don’t overreach in trying to spin a bad situation.** Better to admit mistakes and take action to correct them. You’ll get points for credibility and candor.

Reporters are professionals, even if some are inexperienced. You were once an inexperienced professional. Keep appointments or provide a solid explanation if you can’t.

Don’t insult reporters. Don’t talk down to them. Nobody likes such treatment. If they seek an appointment in advance, it is fair to ask what subjects they want to cover in the interview. That allows you time to prepare properly. It is not fair to ask that questions be submitted in advance.

Don't be afraid to punt. Texas Parks and Wildlife Department is full of knowledgeable and experienced personnel. You can defer a question to someone who may be better suited to answer it. But be sure to give them a heads up to let them know what's coming.

If you have a schedule to keep, remind them at the beginning how much time you have for them. That way, no one should be caught off guard when you say, "I'm sorry, but I have to leave now." Emergencies should always be understood.

4.3 Comments, Please!

"No comment!" Try waving a red flag in front of a bull. It is less painful than the reaction you will get from saying "no comment" to a reporter on deadline. Here are some ways to decline comment **without** saying "no comment."

Never decline comment abruptly or without explanation. You can say: "Texas Parks and Wildlife Department regulations do not allow me to give out that information because..." (Explain why).
Suggestions:

"That's not my place to say; but you can contact NAME about that."

"We typically don't release information on criminal investigations to avoid jeopardizing the case."

"I don't have all the facts on that right now, but contact me or NAME later and we'll make sure you get the information as soon as it is available."

Or you can simply say: "**I don't know, but I'll check and call you back.**" The last two are great lines. They mean you will try to help! But follow through and call them back. Soon.

Some questions are so obvious you should always have the answers. You still need to consider in advance what those might be. A few common ones:

- Why is this a park (WMA, museum, hatchery)? What are the reasons it was set aside?
- What are your responsibilities in the park?
- Where does this park rank in the State Park System? (size, visits, budgets, and other simple measures)
- How does the park benefit the local community? The state?
- What is there to do here?
- Where do visitors come from?
- What is the park's worst problem?

Relax! History records no proven incidents of cannibalism by journalists. Neither cameras nor microphones bite. Talk to the reporter or the camera, one to one. Forget the larger audience. It isn't there during the interview. No matter how large the viewership, at the time of the interview it is just you and the reporter. If you have prepared for the worst questions you can imagine, you will have every reason to be confident!

Many interviewers will wrap up by asking you if there's anything else you'd like to say. Anticipate this by knowing in advance what points you want to cover. If there's something worth saying and you haven't had the opportunity, use the opening provided by the reporter. But try to say the most important information up front in the interview. If the reporter's listening, those first answers can influence the rest of the interview.

4.4 Interview Tips Summary

Pre-interview:

- Ask what is the story topic/angle offer options for positive angle
- Gauge the reporters knowledge of the subject matter and provide background info
- Ask what information might be needed (statistics, policy, general info)
- Ask who else might be interviewed
- Do not ask for a question list
- Try to chose an appropriate interview location

Interview preparation:

- Determine your key messages – What's the bottom line?
- Anticipate questions and formulate responses
- Aim for – and practice 10 to 15 second soundbites (your main points)
- Practice, practice, practice

During the interview:

- Clear you mind of other business
- Make sure to properly identify yourself and your organization
- Always tell the truth
- Remember that you are in control – the reporter asks the questions, but you provide the answers
- Listen carefully to the question – Think through your answers carefully before speaking

- Provide direct, concise responses but speak in complete sentences (remember your soundbites)
- Don't feel that you have to fill silence. If you are satisfied with your answer, stop speaking
- Stay focused on your message – If asked an “off the mark” question, quickly steer back to your message
- Rephrase the question if need be- then answer it yourself
- Take advantage of the opportunity to have a last word and sum up your message
- Offer a contact phone number for follow-up questions
- Keep the tone conversational. Don't use too much TPWD jargon or lingo

On-Camera Appearance:

- Remember that YOU represent Texas Parks and Wildlife Department
- Avoid wearing sunglasses and/or a hat. Get rid of gum or chewing tobacco
- Choose a suitable location
- Look directly at the reporter, don't shift your eyes
- Sit in a chair that does not swivel, rock or move around
- Relax and smile!

Often reporters can show up at a facility or site without notice. You may be called upon to provide an interview with little notice or preparation. Here are some things to remember about the surprise interview and some pitfalls of which you need to be aware. First of all, relax and be yourself. Give the information that you can but if you do not know something, say so. Try to find out and get the information to them at a later time. Don't assume that the reporter will just go away because they usually will not. Be aware of the following interview pitfalls, especially during the surprise interview.

- Be careful when it come to speculation questions. “What if” scenarios and be perilous
- Don't go off the record
- Never, ever lie

It is important to return news reporters' phone calls as soon as possible or we risk not having our point of view included in the story. When a reporter calls, you should write down the reporter's name, company name and phone number. Find out the deadline by which they need the information. Consider the following points:

- Is this something you can handle, or do you need to contact your supervisor or the News staff at Austin Headquarters? Be sure to keep others in the loop by phone, e-mail or smoke signal.
- Does this constitute a formal Open Records request? (see details in Section 6)

4.5 Media Specifics

For a print media interview, learn about the publication's readership. Prepare accordingly.

Newspapers and magazines have a great capacity for reporting details. Know the ones that are relevant. Be aware of whether a reporter is taking notes or using a tape recorder.

Make use of fact sheets or other written material that can provide the details (of, say, budgets and staffing) that can bog down an interview.

For a radio interview, remember that numbers are terrible. So are rambling answers. Be succinct. Be brief. Be to the point. If you have to think through an answer, do it before you start. In a taped interview, an editor can eliminate a pause before the answer much more easily than one in the middle of your statement.

For television, if you have enough notice, get out your best, newest uniform, have your haircut — anything that will enhance your appearance. Just before the actual interview, visit a mirror and check yourself. Otherwise, the rules are much like those for radio. Camera operators will often ask you to repeat an answer just so they can get a different angle. They also may ask for casual footage of you talking with the reporter. Remember, they are doing this for the picture, but the sound is on and anything dumb you might say could be used against you.

Focus your eyes wherever the camera operator tells you. But do focus on something. An unfocused gaze or wandering eyes are quite noticeable to a viewer. Good posture is a must. Don't fidget or swivel in your chair.

See more detailed television advice in Section 2 of this guide.

section five

legal and law enforcement issues (crimes and calamities)

5.1 Crisis Management

As any employee knows, rumor can outrun reality. When something newsworthy happens in your park or facility, especially a crime or an accident, you must work quickly and efficiently to overtake the gossip. Given the nature of our business, emergencies and accidents are inevitable. You should be prepared for incidents such as fish kills, drownings, deaths, injuries and rescues. Weather-related emergencies such as floods, tornadoes and ice storms are possible as well. All these events can attract media attention, and you should prepare for this as well.

- **First:** Designate one spokesperson. Depending on the nature, severity and sensitivity of the event, the spokesperson may be anyone ranging from a local staff member to a Communications Division expert or the Executive Director
- **Second:** Your spokesperson must be fully informed.
- **Third:** Give your chosen spokesperson a chance to function in the role before disaster strikes. The training offered by TPWD Communications Division is a good place for this. Emergencies are lousy training grounds.

A single source of information is essential in an emergency. It sharply reduces the likelihood of conflicting or confusing “official” statements. The source, however, is only as good as the information he or she gets. It is the spokesperson’s job — not the field staff working on the problem — to determine (in consultation with top management) what information is releasable. Reporters are aware that we can’t always release everything we know, especially in the case of a death or a criminal investigation. Aside from management, the spokesperson should be the only person making requests that impose on field personnel’s valuable time. The concept here is to have one person dealing with the media so that other employees can work the incident.

The site manager is responsible for management of a disaster situation. The public information effort supports and explains the management program. In many cases, the first contact a reporter has with a facility is during a crisis. (A shrewd spokesperson will make sure these names remain media contacts. There’s nothing better than having a reporter who knows the turf.) How we react to the crisis, and how we supply information about the crisis, may forever affect the reporter’s perceptions of Texas Parks and Wildlife Department.

Sometimes the first word to the news media of a disaster will come from the spokesperson. Your spokesperson should contact the principal news media as soon as there's enough information to convey the scope of the calamity.

Don't forget: Your crisis is a reporter's crisis, too. Reporters are under pressure to give clear, concise, up-to-the-minute reports. Regardless of the medium in which they work, reporters are rushing to beat deadlines. Here are some tips to guide a spokesperson through media contact during a crisis.

- **Don't Delay.** Time is crucial to you and the media. Beat the rumors.
- **Don't lie.** Lies are spelled with seven letters: T-R-O-U-B-L-E.
- **Don't speculate.** Speculation that proves wrong can be taken as lies. The job is to reduce chaos and misinformation — not to contribute to it.
- **Don't keep secrets.** Where facts are known, tell them, unless you have a good reason not to. If there is reason to withhold facts, tell the reason.
- **Don't ad lib.** You may think there isn't time for a formal news release, but there must be time to organize coherent notes so you can tell the story correctly. Use these notes to make a statement and prepare a quick advisory to e-mail out.
- **Don't joke.** They fall flat. Morbid humor may relieve tension, but the official spokesperson must reflect the solemnity and severity of the situation. The friends and relatives of victims are rightfully intolerant of those who make light of their troubles. Jokes rarely translate well in print.
- **Don't neglect to follow up.** Note every question for which you have no immediate answer. Then, at the earliest opportunity, get the answer and give it to the reporter who asked.

5.2 Predictable Demands

Radio stations will want tape-recorded interviews. They can usually get these by phone.

Newspapers and wire services will want facts in depth, preferably in writing. Television and still photographers will want to take pictures. Depending on the incident, maps are often very useful in communicating information.

The spokesperson can expect to spend a lot of time on the telephone. Especially for rural parks or programs, most reporters will be too far away to cover an emergency in a timely manner, unless the emergency is expected to last for more than a day. At urban sites, news crews may arrive along with the first employees working the incident.

The public information officer may need exclusive access to a telephone and a computer terminal with e-mail capability where possible. (A copier and printer can be shared, but must be nearby).

He or she must be able to work away from the eager eyes and ears of reporters. He or she must have full access to the management team.

The press will need an “information central.” If a couple of local reporters show up, this might be as simple as asking them to work in a quiet corner of the visitor center. For a big event, you may set up a more formal briefing area. Regardless of the scale, there should be a space that allows them to work without interfering with either the emergency or running the park.

In short, have a plan to assemble the needed personnel and resources to handle a crisis at any hour. Crises don’t conveniently happen when the right people are at hand.

Preparation can minimize problems when another must step in, whether an acting facility manager or an acting spokesperson.

5.3 The Usual Sequence of Events

Incidents often follow the same sequence regardless of the nature of the crisis. Here’s a typical sequence:

- You recognize an event has happened. Of course your chain of command is notified as soon as feasible.
- Your appointed public spokesperson gathers as much information as possible, and heads to a computer for a 15-minute foray in creating a news release. This won’t be fancy but it needs to be accurate. It needs to have the basics known at that point — who, what, when, where. It can acknowledge that more information will become available.

Have someone other than your spokesperson answer the calls only to collect phone numbers and e-mail addresses. Using a list that’s already created (See Section 1.9), the spokesperson or staff will e-mail the release to local media and whoever else has inquired in the time it has taken to prepare your basic release. Here are your most likely “customers:”

- **Radio Stations:** They deal in instant news and are the quickest ways to spread news fast. Call the local ones. Call the all-news radio for your area first.
- **Newspapers:** Reach the daily papers first, unless the weeklies are the closest media outlets.

- **Television:** Local stations only. They'll feed to the network for a really good or really big event.
- **Internet:** Work with the Austin headquarters office to decide if the incident warrants attention on the WILDNET or TPWD home page.

The first inquiries almost always come by phone. If the disaster is serious enough, the media will arrive in person. If the incident goes on long enough for the media to arrive, they'll want to get to the scene, especially the photographers. Don't be surprised — it's not ghoulish, it's their job. For multi-day incidents, establish a briefing schedule so the incident managers can cover basic updates once for a group of reporters. Individual interviews with principal incident managers will also need scheduling.

After a long or serious incident, expect media post-mortems. As the incident winds down, think ahead on how the site or program will answer question about why it happened, was there an adequate response, will it happen again, is the public safe, etc.

5.4 Photography

Give newspaper and television photographers maximum cooperation. Several million people view a nighttime network news piece — more people than we can ever reach with a single news release. We work hard to deliver our mission-based message. These folks can do it for us.

Common sense dictates a few precautions: Only legitimate news photographers should be allowed in an emergency area and then only with an "escort." This is not amateur hour! They should not be allowed where they can interfere with remedial work or disturb evidence of a crime.

Just as it's a good idea for TPWD field employees to get to know the local media before a crisis, it also makes sense for the staff that will be on the front lines of an emergency to know how to deal with media. Reporters and photographers are in a competitive, deadline-driven world. Confrontations with rangers, wardens, biologists or others at an incident can turn ugly in a hurry, and the ill effects can last long after the incident. When the response team practices the medical or logistical steps needed to respond to an incident, ask a staff member to help by playing the role of reporter. Practice how you'll respond to requests to get close to the action, interview survivors, fly in your helicopter, walk the fire line, or photograph the flood damage. Understand why you're making the media-related decisions you make, and that you appreciate the consequences.

5.5 Criminal Investigations

For TPWD game wardens, release of information concerning criminal investigations may be made only by the officers directly responsible for the investigation, or by appropriate supervisors or designated Law Enforcement Division Public Information Officers after consultation with the investigating officers. It is also important to coordinate the release of information with other agencies involved in the case. Once an arrest is made and the primary responsibility shifts to the court, media inquiries should normally be referred to the appropriate county or district attorney. Investigating officers may release certain factual statements about the accused, including name, age, residence, occupation and family status. If the accused has not been apprehended, information may be released in order to aid in capture or warn the public of danger.

Don't "stonewall." "No comment," like "I take the Fifth Amendment," is perceived as an admission of guilt, even if unintended. Practice answers such as:

- "We won't know until the investigation is complete."
- "I would tell you if I knew, but I don't, so I'll have to get that for you later."
- "Our policy prohibits release of the names of juvenile victims (or suspects)."
- "I am waiting for the answer to that myself — you'll get it as soon as I have it."

Don't release names of:

- A victim who is unconscious or dead and reasonable efforts to notify family or first of kin have not been made
- A victim of a sexual assault
- A juvenile victim or suspect (unless approved by a local juvenile authority)
- Witnesses
- Personnel involved in an incident response who could be placed at risk of retaliation. (This is an area where the public's right to know gets balanced against an employee's safety.)

Don't give explicit details of injuries or fatalities. The injured has clear privacy rights, and the deceased's family can legally be spared the graphic details making Page One. In most cases, the details are not pertinent to the actual news story. And until autopsies are done, the initial details reported at an incident may be wrong. Don't make ethnic or racial references unless they are essential to the incident. Always avoid slang or police jargon whenever possible.

Don't convict suspects. Never say "Bill Smith set fire to the cabin, but we caught him." A better statement is: "We believe the cabin fire was caused by arson. We have a suspect, Bill Smith, in custody and are continuing our investigation." If formal charges have been brought, you can say: "Bill Smith has been charged with the crime of arson in the first degree in connection with the cabin fire. First degree arson is defined as..."

Don't assign liability. It is inappropriate to say either "the park failed to warn visitors of the danger," or "the visitors ignored the park's warnings." Why? Because such statements place responsibility — and liability. Like criminal charges, these are matters better left to formal investigative findings or courts of law.

Don't confirm or deny information released by other sources unless you either confirm it with the source or determine if it is releasable by TPWD. Otherwise, you may compromise an investigation or other legal proceedings. These last three categories are chief reasons for the caution against speculating. Your job is to give facts. If a formal process must determine facts, then you don't have facts to give unless that process is complete.

5.6 TPWD Law Enforcement Guidelines for Communication Regarding Criminal Investigations

TPWD Law Enforcement operational procedures specify what information should and should not be released during an investigation. The following information should **NOT** be released.

- Names of offenders under the age of 17 (unless approved by a local juvenile authority)
- Opinions regarding character and reputation of the accused
- Opinions as to the accused guilt or innocence
- Lab test results, including results from or refusal to take a polygraph or breath test
- Statements or refusals made by the accused
- Identity or testimony of witnesses
- Plea bargain possibilities or arrangements
- No Law Enforcement employee shall deliberately pose a person in custody for news media photography
- Prior criminal record of the accused

After the commission of a crime, but before an arrest, the pertinent facts of the crime may be released. The fact that lab analysis is in progress may also be released. Once an arrest is made, the facts of the arrest including time, place, resistance and use of weapons may be released to the media. You may also want to identify the investigating and arresting officer and the agencies involved in the case. After the arrest you may also release information on the court where the charge was filed and whether or not the defendant was released on bond. It is acceptable to discuss a range of possible penalties for the charge including fines and/or jail time.

Regarding information released after the crime, but before arrest, issuance of warrant or filing of charges, the following limitations apply:

- May release pertinent facts on the crime
- May release the fact that lab analysis is in progress
- May not release identities of people wanted for questioning, unless necessary to aid in apprehension or investigation, or to warn public

After arrest or charge, the following info may be released:

- Facts of arrest, including time and place, pursuit, resistance and use of weapons
- Identity of investigating and arresting officers and agencies involved
- Description of evidence seized, other than a confession, admission or statement
- Nature or text of the charge as filed in court and the identity of the person charged
- Court where the charge was filed, whether the defendant was released on bond or remained in jail
- Range of possible penalties for the charge, including fines and/or jail time

NOTE: TPWD game wardens should refer to the Law Enforcement Division General Order 6.130 RELEASE OF INFORMATION IN CRIMINAL INVESTIGATIONS.

5.7 TPWD Media Response Protocol for Urgent Incidents

Basic assumptions:

- Field or HQ Law Enforcement personnel are best able to provide information to news media and serve as spokespeople on law enforcement matters, provided that it does not inhibit their ability to fulfill their primary law enforcement duties. This is especially true for routine communication on typical cases with local media that field personnel deal with on a consistent basis.
- HQ Communications Division personnel are most effective in dealing with major market (larger city) media, in writing news releases for law enforcement review, and in distributing news releases by broadcast fax, e-mail and mail as needed. This recognizes that computer, e-mail and telecommunications resources at HQ, plus proximity to leadership for quick approval of messages and decisions, can make work from HQ more effective in many cases.

Response protocol for major incidents:

- In some cases, it may be helpful or more effective for Communications personnel to leave HQ to assist field employees on the ground. Criteria would include:
 - A crime, crisis, accident, disaster or other story that is attracting interest from major market news media outside the local/rural area, especially incidents attracting widespread coverage by multiple news organizations.
 - Sustained incidents expected to continue for more than 24-48 hours.
 - Situations where the on-scene media presence is so widespread, intense or continuous that it is distracting field personnel from effective discharge of their primary duties, or where the local/field TPWD rep dealing with the media feels overwhelmed and needs assistance.
 - Situations involving multiple partners or law enforcement agencies where TPWD has a strong interest in making sure that messages about TPWD's role are accurately and adequately reflected in news communication.
- In cases where Communications personnel head to the field, the ranking law enforcement employee on the scene or the employee in charge of the incident or investigation will consult with the Communications rep regarding the following:
 - Designation of media spokesperson to give interviews. TPWD policy has traditionally been for field employees in charge, such as game wardens or park managers, speak directly to the media. In some cases, however, the decision may be made to have a communications rep handle interviews.
 - Coordination and approval – identify which partners or TPWD supervisors need to approve news releases or plans.
 - For Communications employees to be effective in the field, minimal office resources such as a phone and desk will likely be needed. Computer and/or Internet resources may also be helpful. These factors must be weighed in the decision to work from the field rather than HQ.
 - Timely access to field personnel with complete information on the incident will be necessary for a Communications rep to be effective.

section six

responding to public information requests

Many journalists use the Texas Public Information Act as a way to formally request information, especially if they believe it is information that an agency would not willingly divulge. Generally, if a journalist or **any** public requester can get information through an Open Records request, it's a good idea to provide it willingly and quickly, as this defeats the perception that we may have something to hide. TPWD policy is to provide the public with the fullest possible access to public information unless there is a compelling legal reason to keep the information confidential. Below are guidelines that will help you distinguish inquiries that trigger Open Records laws, as well as simple steps required to fulfill Open Records inquiries.

6.1 What is Public Information

- All information that a governmental body (TPWD) collects, assembles, or maintains in the course of business is public information unless it is expressly excepted from disclosure under the Texas Public Information Act or made confidential by other law.
- Public information can be in a variety of forms, including but not limited to computer files including e-mails, paper, microfilm, and photographs.

6.2 Rights of Requesters

- **Prompt** access (usually within 10 business days) to information that is not confidential by law or excepted under the Texas Public Information Act.
- Receive treatment **equal** to all other requesters, including accommodations for people with disabilities in accordance with the ADA.
- **Choose** to inspect information, receive copies, or both.
- Receive a **written statement of estimated charges**, if more than \$40, before work is started.

6.3 TPWD Responsibilities

- Establish **reasonable procedures** for inspecting or copying public information and inform requesters of these procedures.
- **Be informed** about open records law and educate employees.

- Treat **all** requesters uniformly.
- Inform requester if information cannot be provided promptly and set a **reasonable time** to provide it.
- **Segregate** public information from information that may be withheld.
- Before finalizing a request, inform the requester of estimated charges over \$40 and any changes above 20% of the original estimate, and **confirm** that the requester accepts the charges or has amended the request in writing.
- Timely request a legal ruling from the Attorney General's Office before withholding any confidential or excepted information.

6.4 TPWD Public Information Policy

- TPWD policy is to release the information requested unless there is a compelling legal reason to keep the information confidential.
- TPWD may not make the decision to withhold confidential or excepted information without first asking for a legal ruling from the Attorney General's Office. Always contact TPWD's Open Records Coordinator, Elsa Bosque at (512) 389-8855, within one business day after receiving an Open Records request if you believe it is seeking information not subject to public release. The Texas Public Information Act contains a number of very strict deadlines. Failure to meet the deadlines can have very serious consequences.
- Once information is released to the public, it is generally no longer considered confidential. Thus, in most situations, if excepted information (examples: draft report, audit working papers, management plans) is released, it becomes available to the public under the Texas Public Information Act.
- Requests should be handled as stated in TPWD's Open Records and Customer Information Policy and Procedure located on WILDnet.

6.5 Steps in the Process

- **Receive request.** The request must be in writing. You may respond to a request by telephone, so long as you do not disclose confidential information. However, telephone requests are not considered open records requests under the Texas Public Information Act.
- **Forward requests to liaison.** If you receive a request for information that your division/branch does not have or if you think the requested information is confidential or excepted from disclosure, then forward the request to the Open Records Liaison for your branch/division within one (1) business day.

- **Notify Communications/Government Relations.** If the request is from the media (newspaper, magazine, television, radio), notify the News and Information Branch of the Communications Division. If the request is from a legislator or other government official, notify Government Relations by completing the on-line Legislative Contact Reporting form.
- **Notify Open Records Coordinator, Legal Division.** If the requester asks for information that is confidential or excepted from disclosure, or if you have questions about how to handle the request, notify the Open Records Coordinator in the Legal Division as soon as possible.
- **Provide information.** When information is clearly open to the public, provide the information to the requester promptly after receiving the request.
- **Provide notice of availability.** If you cannot provide the information within ten (10) business days after TPWD received the request, notify the requester in writing of a date and time when the information will be available for inspection or copying.
- **Clarify request.** Contact the requester if you do not understand the request. Be sure to document your discussion. Do not ask why the requester wants the information.
- **Follow rules for charges.** Follow the rules for charges in the TPWD Open Records and Customer Information Procedure.

6.6 Information Excepted from Open Records (not considered public)

These are some of the types of information considered confidential or excepted from public disclosure. For a more complete list, please consult the TPWD Open Records and Customer Information Policy and Procedure on WILDnet.

- Information made confidential by statute or judicial decision
- Social Security Number of a living person
- Certain personnel information
- Certain financial information including trade secrets and proprietary information (ex: copyrighted materials) of 3rd parties
- Information related to pending or reasonably anticipated litigation
- Attorney/client communications
- Information relating to bid proposals on a pending state contract when it would give advantage to a particular bidder
- Certain law enforcement records
- Certain policy discussions and recommendations in agency memoranda

- Archeological site information, particularly archeological site locations
- Audit working papers
- Addresses, telephone numbers, social security numbers, and personal family information of former and current public employees
- Certain documents held for historical research
- Test items
- TPWD Wildlife Management Plans under Section 12.0251 of the TPWD Code
- Certain motor vehicle records
- Certain TPWD customer lists
- Driver's license numbers

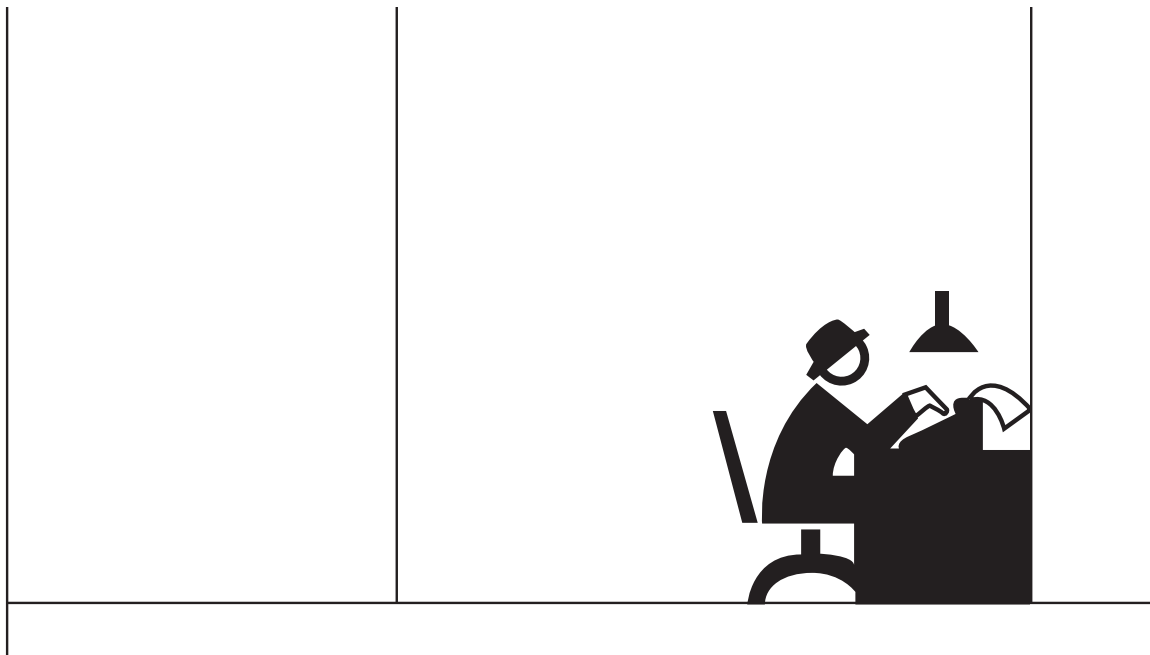
appendix one

tpwd public events submission form

The following form is used to send information on public events at state parks, fish hatcheries, wildlife management areas, other TPWD program areas and some private sites to the Marketing Branch at headquarters. They use it to create a statewide events calendar that is provided to the *Texas Parks & Wildlife* magazine and public TV series, TPWD Web Site Events Calendar, the Park of the Month news article and State Park Events Calendar sent to Texas magazines and newspapers, *Passport to Texas* radio show, *Texas Conservation Passport Journal* newsletter and *Texas Outdoors Journal* magazine.

The Marketing Branch solicits event information on a quarterly basis by sending a series of reminders every three months to state parks, WMAs, hatcheries and some private sites. Event information providers use the form on the following page to send in event details. After the events submission deadline, event listing proofs or drafts are sent to all sites for proofreading, with a deadline of one week to reply with corrections.

For more information, contact Dianne Sebai in the Marketing Branch at (512) 389-4683 or dianne.sebai@tpwd.state.tx.us.



Please contact your division Web coordinator if you would like this information featured on your site Web page.



PUBLIC EVENT LISTING

June, July & Aug. 2008

DUE: Feb. 12, 2008

One event per form

E-mail to:

eis.events@tpwd.state.tx.us

Fax to: (512) 389-8029

Mail to: 4200 Smith School Rd.
Austin, TX 78744

FIELD CONTACT: _____

Name

Telephone Number

FAX Number

E-mail Address

PROOFREADER FOR FINAL COPY: _____

Name

Telephone Number

FAX Number

E-mail Address

WHO TAKES PHONE CALLS FROM THE MEDIA?: _____

Name

Telephone Number

FAX Number

E-mail Address

Name and Mailing Address of Site

EVENT INFORMATION

WHAT? _____

Event name

Brief description: (1-3 sentences):

WHEN? _____

Dates: _____

Start Time: _____

End Time: _____

Dates: _____

Start Time: _____

End Time: _____

Dates: _____

Start Time: _____

End Time: _____

WHERE? _____

SP SHS SNA WMA SFH Other

Tourism Region:

Big Bend Country

Gulf Coast

Hill Country

Panhandle Plains

Pineywoods

Prairies & Lakes

South Texas Plains

WHO? _____

Event leader

Title/affiliation

Accessible for mobility impaired? Yes No

Yes No

Reservations Required? Yes No

Yes No

Accessible for visually impaired? Yes No

Yes No

Reservations Deadline _____

Accessible for hearing impaired? Yes No

Yes No

Reservations Phone # _____

Event Fee Charged ? Yes No

Yes No

Texas State Parks \$
Pass Holders _____

Adults \$ _____

Senior Citizens \$ _____

Children 12 & under \$ _____

Entry permit required? Yes No

Yes No

Is this program available on request? Yes No

Is this an on-going program? Yes No

Yes No

Is this a Lone Star Legacy event? Yes No

If yes, is it: Weekly Monthly Annual Other: _____

appendix two

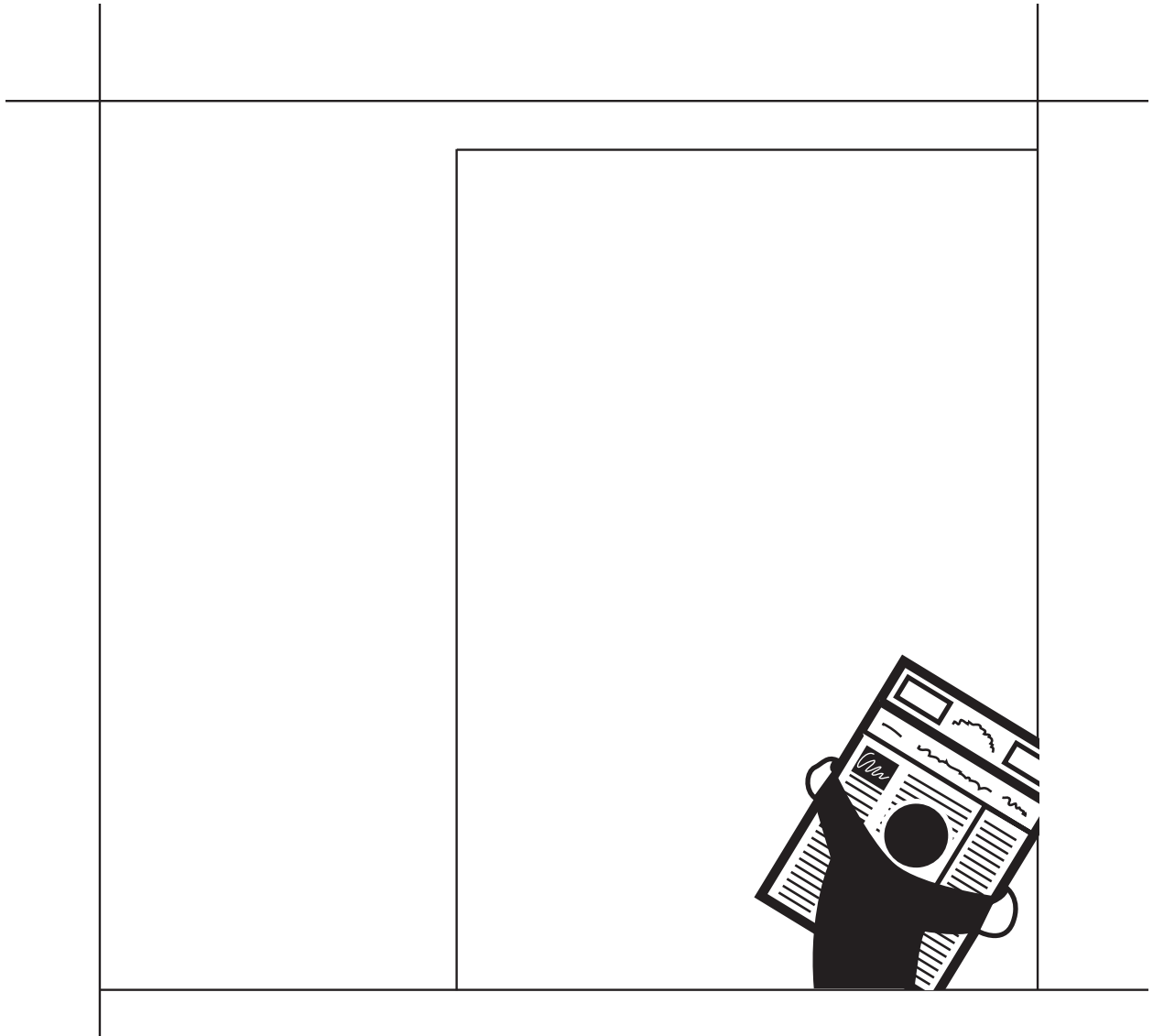
sample news releases

Note: A news release template (PWD 1081) is available on WILDnet at:

<http://wildnet.tpwd.state.tx.us/admin/forms/index.phtml>

(pwd_1081_k0700_news_release_template.doc).

This provides a basic document template that can be customized for an individual state park or other site or program.





NEWS

4200 SMITH SCHOOL ROAD • AUSTIN, TEXAS 78744 • FAX 512-389-4450

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Contact: Larry Hodge, (903) 676-2277

March 1, 2006

Kansas Angler Lands 13.1-pound Bass Worth \$5,240

Budweiser Sharelunker No. 400 Comes From Lake Amistad

ATHENS, Texas — And the winner is ... Jason Baird of Gypsum, Kansas.

Fishing the Castle Canyon area of Lake Amistad about noon Tuesday, Baird and guide Ray Hanselman, Jr., spotted a big bass on her bed. After 45 tension-filled minutes during which the big bass darted at the Smallie Beaver creature bait in the White Trash pattern at least 15 times without taking it, she finally bit.

Thinking the bass weighed perhaps 8 or 9 pounds, Baird was going to lip it until it came to the boat and they realized it was much bigger. Hanselman then handed Baird a net so he could land the fish, which was 26 inches long and 21 inches around.

"This was my second time to fish Lake Amistad, and I'd never sight fished before," Baird said. "Amistad is awesome. There were so many big fish on beds in there."

The 34-year-old Baird and three friends drove all Monday night to get to the lake to fish. "I had seen on Bass Center on ESPN that Budweiser ShareLunker 398 had been caught, but I did not know my fish might be eligible for the prize for number 400 until we called another guide after I caught it and he started screaming to get the fish weighed and call the ShareLunker hotline," Baird said. Baird, who is Parks and Recreation Director for Herington, Kansas, was using a Falcon rod with a Quantum spinning reel spooled with 30-pound-test braided line.

In addition to the usual prizes of a Budweiser ShareLunker jacket and a fiberglass replica of the fish, Baird will receive a cash award of \$400 per pound of fish and a G.Loomis rod with Shimano reel valued at a total of \$600. Prizes will be funded by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Foundation, Anheuser-Busch and G.Loomis.

What does an angler do after catching the probable fish of a lifetime and gaining an unexpected windfall in the process?

Go fishing again. What else?

Baird and friends and Hanselman were back on the water at daybreak Wednesday, just as Budweiser ShareLunker program manager David Campbell was pulling into the Texas Freshwater Fisheries Center after an 895-mile, 16-hour round trip.

Following a quick examination and measuring session, the fish forever after to be known as Budweiser ShareLunker No. 400 was swimming circles in her new home, peering at curious photographers through the picture window in her personal tank. If all goes as planned in the coming weeks, she will mate with a male descendant of an earlier ShareLunker to produce several thousand offspring that will be stocked into Lake Amistad and perhaps other public lakes in Texas.

And in 8 or 9 years, another lucky angler may find himself enjoying a very personal connection to the present drama in the form of another, perhaps even bigger fish on the end of his or her line. Making that happen as often as possible is the ultimate goal of the Budweiser ShareLunker program.

Anglers legally catching a 13-pound or bigger largemouth bass in Texas waters may enter it into the ShareLunker program by calling David Campbell at (903) 681-0550 or by paging him at (888) 784-0600.

For information on the Budweiser ShareLunker program, including current and previous season records, go to the TPWD Web site.

The Budweiser ShareLunker program is made possible through support from Anheuser-Busch, Inc. Since 1991, Anheuser-Busch, in partnership with the Texas Parks and Wildlife Foundation, has contributed millions of dollars in funding to support conservation causes and fishing, hunting and outdoor recreation programs in Texas.

On the Net:

- <http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/spdest/visitorcenters/tffc/budsharelunker/>

Editors: Images associated with this news release are available on the TPWD Web site (<http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/news/newsroom/photo/>).



NEWS

4200 SMITH SCHOOL ROAD • AUSTIN, TEXAS 78744 • FAX 512-389-4450

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Contact: Rob McCorkle, (512) 389-4537

March 6, 2006

Digital Photo Workshop Slated at Big Bend Ranch State Park

PRESIDIO, Texas — Wildflowers, scenic mountain vistas, desert springs, roadrunners and other visual delights await camera buffs this April who want to learn more about the “ins” and “outs” of digital photography from a veteran outdoor photographer.

Jim Carr of Houston will teach a three-day workshop, April 21-23, at Big Bend Ranch State Park in far West Texas. The workshop will concentrate on digital photography fundamentals and what equipment and computer software are available today to take quality pictures and enhance ones that need help, Carr said.

“One of the main disappointments that I hear from people who visit the ranch is their inability to capture the mountains and grandeur of the West Texas landscapes that make the Big Bend so special,” Carr said. “While capturing such an image has always been possible, though not easily done, digital cameras and software programs have made taking quality panoramic photos much easier.”

Carr knows Big Bend Ranch well. He has been conducting trail rides and photo workshops at the scenic 300,000-acre state park and working cattle ranch for more than 10 years.

Workshop participants will be divided into four groups of photographers at the ranch. Photographers will learn how to download their photos to a computer disc and how to adjust colors, size photos and perform other editing tasks using the latest photo editing software.

The workshop costs \$400, which includes meals, lodging, all park fees and transportation in connection with the on-site workshop. Workshop participants will meet at Fort Leaton State Historic Site in Presidio and be transported to the state park.

To register for the workshop, call Big Bend Ranch State Park at (432) 229-3416. For additional information about the workshops, call Carr at (281) 486-8070.



NEWS

4200 SMITH SCHOOL ROAD • AUSTIN, TEXAS 78744 • FAX 512-389-4450

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Contact: Tom Harvey, (512) 389-4453

Feb. 22, 2006

"Operation Pescador" Targets Illegal Commercial Fishing, Other Violations

Game Wardens Step Up Efforts To Clean Up Falcon Lake

ZAPATA, Texas — Game wardens from across the state are converging on Falcon Lake along the Texas-Mexico border in a concerted effort to clean up illegal commercial fishing activities and prevent water safety violations, as well as to enforce other state laws.

"Operation Pescador" will involve game wardens stopping vessels on Falcon Lake to ensure compliance with all state game, fish and water safety laws. Commercial fishermen in possession of illegal nets will be arrested and transported to the Zapata County jail and their vessels will be seized, according to Texas Parks and Wildlife Department Game Warden Captain Chris Huff.

TPWD is coordinating the effort with other agencies, including the Zapata County Sheriff's Office, U.S. Border Patrol, U.S. Customs, Texas Department of Public Safety and Texas Homeland Security.

Falcon Lake is a massive impoundment along the Rio Grande River extending about 20 miles long and three miles wide at some points and covers 87,000 surface acres.

Huff estimates there are about 75 Mexican commercial fishermen who fish Falcon Lake daily. It is legal to use gill nets, hoop nets and other commercial fishing gear on the Mexican side of the lake; such practices are outlawed in all Texas state waters.

TPWD game wardens routinely patrol the lake investigating these kinds of activities and have been successful in apprehending violators. According to Huff, patrols during the last six months have resulted in 12 arrests, along with seizure of seven vessels and outboard motors and more than 38,000 feet of gill netting. A similar operation conducted between Sept. 2004 and Aug. 2005 resulted in 34 arrests, seizure of 23 vessels and more than 84,000 feet of illegal nets.

Unlike routine lake patrols elsewhere, Lake Falcon presents unique challenges for law enforcement. "Whenever we see one of these types of boats, we don't know if it is an illegal fisherman or a drug

runner,” said Huff. “Most of the arrests involve Mexican nationals and once we’ve made contact and determine they are conducting illegal activity we have to seize their equipment and vessel and bring them ashore. We can’t simply issue a citation because there are other violations of the law that come into play; illegal entry.”

“We’re not just going to concentrate on illegal commercial fishing activities, but all game and fish activities,” said TPWD Game Warden Major Alfonso Vielma. “We intend to bring attention that is needed to Falcon Lake. There are other elements coming through the lake — illegal aliens, drug smuggling — dangerous elements. We’re concentrating on game law violations, but we won’t ignore other violations of the law.”

The location of Falcon Lake makes for easy access by illegal immigrants from Mexico to Texas soil, as well as for illegal drug smuggling activity and is sometimes viewed as a potential Homeland Security threat. Violations including illegal entry, drug smuggling or other homeland security related activities will be turned over to other appropriate authorities.

Huff added it is not uncommon to arrest the same individuals several times over a period of time; they typically return after obtaining another vessel. But, he sees the additional enforcement pressure as a deterrent. “Our wardens are doing a great job with great success, but a statewide operation is necessary to show the fishermen and the public we are committed to enforcing the law,” he stressed.

Commercial netting has been outlawed in Texas waters for decades because of the potential impacts to a fishery. Commercial netting nearly wiped out redfish populations along the Texas coast in the ‘70s, which led to the statewide ban.

Illegal commercial netting can severely deplete aquatic resources on reservoirs such as Falcon Lake, where low water levels during dry periods can concentrate fish, making them susceptible to fishing pressure and poor reproduction. Until recently, Falcon Lake had been suffering through a decade long drought that saw lake levels plummet 50-feet; lowest on record.

Commercial fishing on Falcon Lake is nothing new, according to Huff. The lake was impounded in 1954 and by 1958, an influx of commercial fishermen from East Texas used high powered boats to illegally fish with gill nets and wooden fish boxes. Mexican commercial fishermen soon entered the scene and by the 1970s when commercial fishing became illegal in Texas, had the run of Falcon Lake to themselves.

Insignificant fines and penalties did nothing to deter the activity. By 1980, Mexican commercial fishing operations were at an all-time high with more than 300 registered fishermen. In 1990, TPWD game wardens had filed 175 cases and confiscated more than 50 MILES of illegal nets.

Finally, in 1991, a bill was passed allowing game wardens to seize and confiscate undocumented vessels used in illegal netting activities. Although the confiscation of vessels and gear has had the desired effect, illegal commercial fishing continues on Falcon Lake.

“Why? The answer is simple,” Huff said. “Profit outweighs penalty. The profit being derived from high fish prices and the smuggling of drugs is the incentive. Certain species of rough fish bring more than \$2 per pound on today’s market. What we want to do with stepped up enforcement operations is to make it unprofitable.”

Editors: Images associated with this news release are available on the TPWD Web site (<http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/news/newsroom/photo/>).

TH 2006-02-22



NEWS

4200 SMITH SCHOOL ROAD • AUSTIN, TEXAS 78744 • FAX 512-389-4450

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Contact: Rob McCorkle, (512) 389-4537

February 13, 2006

Historical Documents To Highlight Texas Independence Celebration at Washington-on-the-Brazos

WASHINGTON, Texas — Under siege at the Alamo on March 3, 1836, commander William B. Travis dispatched a horseman with a terse message imploring the 59 men convened here in a drafty frame building to continue their deliberations to give birth to the Republic of Texas.

The resulting Texas Declaration of Independence, the only handwritten copy still in existence, comes home March 4-5 to "The Birthplace of Texas" to highlight the annual Texas Independence Day celebration.

An 1836 newspaper copy of Travis' last letter imploring "let the convention go on and make a declaration of independence," the original handwritten Texas Declaration of Independence and several other rare documents will be on public display together for the first time in 170 years at Washington-on-the-Brazos State Historic Site.

The historic papers will be part of the "Let the Convention Go On" exhibit that opens March 2, Texas Independence Day, at the historic site's Star of the Republic Museum.

The exhibit includes the declaration, Travis' letter, the Constitution of the Republic of Texas, journals of the Convention of 1836, William Fairfax Gray's diary detailing convention proceedings and other key documents clarifying the Texians' grievances against the Mexican government and reasons for seeking independence.

Visitors to Washington-on-the-Brazos can view the documents at the museum from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. during the two-day celebration.

Travis' two-sentence missive to those gathered at the convention, attended by such Texas heroes as Sam Houston, Thomas Rusk and Jose Antonio Navarro, concludes, "If independence is not declared, I shall lay down my arms and so will the men under my command."

“The reason the letter is so important to us,” Houston McGaugh, director of the Star of the Republic Museum, explained “is that Travis was imploring the convention to continue so the world would recognize Texas as an independent country and the United States would protect Texas. He knew if they (the delegates) didn’t declare independence, Mexico would come back into Texas and wipe them out.”

The unprecedented exhibit results from collaboration among the Texas State Library and Archives Commission (Texas Declaration), Texas General Land Office (Constitution), University of Texas at Austin’s Center for American History (Gray’s diary), the Dallas Heritage Society (Convention journals) and Star of the Republic Museum. The documents will be on display through March 16.

Gray, a Virginia soldier and lawyer, arrived in Texas in 1835 and attended the Convention of 1836, recording proceedings in his diary. Gray’s diary was published in 1909 under the title *From Virginia to Texas 1835*.

In addition to the “Let the Convention Go On” exhibit, park visitors attending the two-day celebration can experience the early days of the republic through costumed re-enactors engaged in 19th century folkways, such as blacksmithing and quilting, military drills and old-timey music performed by the No Foolin’ String Band and Fathers of Texas. The latter band features Texas favorite K. R. Woods.

At 2 p.m. Sunday, Houston television personality Ron Stone will emcee a special program honoring invited guests, signers of the 1836 Declaration of Independence and their descendants, concluded by the Texas Army’s black gunpowder salute. A Fathers of Texas concert, featuring Austin music legend Rusty Wier, follows as a lead-up to the traditional cutting of a giant Texas birthday cake.

During the two-day celebration, park visitors can see a replica of Independence Hall on the original site where the Convention of 1836 took place, tour the Star of the Republic Museum and experience 1850s farm life at the Barrington Living History Farm, which includes the original home of Anson Jones, the Republic of Texas’ last president.

All admission fees will be waived during celebration weekend. Festival vendors will offer a variety of food and drinks.

The Washington-on-the-Brazos State Park Association sponsors the Texas Independence Day Celebration.

The historic complex is open daily from 8 a.m. to sunset. Barrington Living History Farm is open to visitors from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Wednesday through Sunday. The Star of the Republic Museum is open daily from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Washington-on-the-Brazos State Historic Site is located off Texas Highway 105 on FM 1155 between Brenham and Navasota, approximately an hour northwest of Houston. For additional details of the weekend celebration, please call (936) 878-2214.

Special Media Photo Op: The historic Republic of Texas documents will be arriving at approximately noon on Tues., Feb. 28, at Washington-on-the-Brazos aboard the Fanthorp Inn State Historic Site's authentic replica of an 1850 Concord stagecoach. Costumed schoolchildren and historical re-enactors will greet the fire engine-red stagecoach.

On the Net:

- <http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/>
- <http://www.birthplaceoftexas.com/>

RM 2006-02-13



NEWS

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Contact: Steve Lightfoot, (512) 389-4701

Jan. 30, 2006

TPWD Unveils Proposed Hunting, Fishing Rule Changes

AUSTIN, Texas — The Texas Parks and Wildlife Department is recommending changes to next year's hunting and fishing regulations, expanding upon the success of several resource management initiatives.

Proposals being considered include: an expansion of special whitetail buck harvest regulations into 40 more counties, broadening of the popular Managed Lands Permit Program to include provisions for upland game birds and elimination of the trophy tarpon tagging requirements.

The department will be seeking comment on these and other proposed changes to the state's hunting and fishing regulations during an upcoming series of public hearings.

Each year, TPWD considers changes in hunting and fishing regulations to achieve resource management objectives and maximize outdoor recreation opportunities consistent with good stewardship. The Texas Parks and Wildlife Commission will make a final decision on the proposals during its April 5 public hearing.

Expand special buck harvest regulations in 40 counties: Among the most ambitious proposals considered is an expansion of special antler restrictions on whitetail deer. Antler restriction regulations currently in effect in 21 counties in the Oak Prairie ecoregion have been effective in improving the age structure of the buck herd, increasing hunter opportunity, and encouraging landowners and hunters to become more actively involved in better habitat management.

Under the regulation, a lawful buck is defined as any buck having at least one unbranched antler OR an inside antler spread of at least 13 inches. The bag limit in the affected counties would be two lawful bucks, no more than one of which may have an inside spread of greater than 13 inches.

Additional counties being considered under this regulation include: Bell, Bosque, Bowie, Camp, Cass, Cherokee, Comal (east of IH 35), Comanche, Coryell, Delta, Eastland, Erath, Fannin, Franklin, Gregg,

Hamilton, Harrison, Hays (east of IH 35), Hopkins, Houston, Lamar, Lampasas, Leon, Marion, Morris, Nacogdoches, Panola, Rains, Red River, Rusk, Sabine, San Augustine, Shelby, Somervell, Titus, Travis (east of IH 35), Upshur, Williamson, Wilson, and Wood counties.

Hunting pressure on buck deer in these counties has been excessive for many years. In 1971, the bag limit in most counties in the eastern third of the state was reduced from two bucks to one in an effort to mitigate excessive hunting pressure.

Despite the reduction, the data continues to indicate excessive harvest of bucks, which results in very poor age structure. Research results indicate that poor age structure within a buck herd creates a longer breeding season, which in turn leads to a longer fawning season and a reduction in fawn production. Poor age structure also contributes to adverse hunter satisfaction.

The criteria used for candidate counties were: the county currently must be a one-buck county, 60 percent of the buck harvest in the county must consist of bucks less than 3.5 years of age, and the county must have a contiguous border with another county in which antler restriction regulations have been implemented. On this basis, the department identified the 40 counties affected by the proposed amendment.

Expand managed lands permits to upland game birds: Another proposal would allow for the establishment of special seasons and bag limits for upland game birds (Rio Grande turkey, quail, pheasant, lesser prairie-chicken, and chachalaca), by species, on properties managed by the landowner under a department-approved wildlife management plan.

The plan would be required to incorporate habitat-based management regimes beneficial to these upland game bird species. In return, landowners would be given additional flexibility in managing harvest based on annual quotas determined by a combination of data including existing habitat conditions and quality of improvements, populations surveys to determine bird production and considerations to assure carrying through a surplus sufficient to maintain or increase future population levels, and keeping decisions based on management goals.

The department believes that the use of incentives such as enhanced bag limits and extended season lengths are useful tools to encourage landowners to engage in practices that are scientifically proven to maintain healthy ecosystems.

Create harvest rules for alligator hunting: TPWD is also proposing to establish the open seasons, rules for tag issuance and use, reporting requirements, and provisions for the sale of alligators taken under a Texas hunting license in counties outside the historic range of the American alligator in Texas; basically counties outside East Texas and along the coast.

Increase deer bag limit in Upton County: TPWD is also proposing to implement a four-deer bag limit for the entirety of Upton County. Under current rules, the bag limit in the portions of Upton County that are either north of U.S. Highway 67 or both south of U.S. Highway 67 and west of State Highway 349 is three deer.

If implemented, the entire county would have a January muzzleloader season for antlerless and spike-buck deer. Department data indicate that deer populations in the northern and western parts of the county are increasing and able to withstand additional hunting pressure.

Additionally, the counties adjoining Upton County on the east and northeast (Glasscock and Reagan counties) contain deer densities similar to those found in Upton County but are under a more liberal regulation (5 deer; no more than 2 bucks) than that being proposed for Upton County. The regulations have been in effect in Glasscock and Reagan counties for five years, and the deer herds in these counties have experienced no adverse impacts. The department therefore does not anticipate that the proposed amendment will result in either waste or depletion of the resource. The proposal also would expand the late muzzleloader season countywide.

Prohibit harvest of largemouth sawfish (*Pristis perotteti*). The proposal is necessary because the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has listed the smalltooth sawfish (*Pristis pectinata*) as endangered. Due to the extreme difficulty in distinguishing the smalltooth sawfish from the largemouth sawfish, the department believes that protection of both species is the only way to protect the listed species.

Eliminate trophy tarpon tag: TPWD is also proposing to eliminate the requirement that tarpon be tagged and instead would implement a minimum length limit. Under current rules, no person may catch and retain a tarpon of less than 80 inches in length, but may retain one tarpon of more than 80 inches in length by tagging the fish with the trophy tarpon tag from the person's fishing license.

The proposed amendment would eliminate the tagging requirement and replace it with a bag limit of one tarpon of 80 inches in length or longer per person.

Alter black drum harvest rules: A similar proposal also would modify the rules governing possession of black drum. Currently, black drum are managed by means of a bag limit combined with minimum and maximum size limits. The proposed amendment would allow a person to keep one black drum of greater than 52 inches in length per day.

Reduce possession limits on flounder: The department is proposing a reduction to the possession limit for flounder taken under a recreational license. Under current rule, the possession limit for any fish is twice the daily bag limit, unless specified otherwise. Thus, with a daily bag limit of 10, the possession limit for flounder is 20, and for those flounder fishing trips which last past midnight the 20 fish per angler

possession limit applies. The proposed change would make the possession limit identical to the daily bag limit.

Naming tripletail (*Lobotes surinamensis*) a game fish: TPWD proposes to list tripletail as a game fish and create a minimum size of 17 inches and daily bag limit of 3 fish [6 in possession]. This rule is similar to what other states have adopted and since tripletail females reach reproductive maturity at about 17 inches, this would provide protection through at least an initial spawning cycle.”

Increasing minimum length limits on largemouth bass: The current harvest regulations for largemouth bass on 250-acre Marine Creek Reservoir (Tarrant County) consist of statewide 14-inch minimum length limit and a five-fish daily bag limit. The proposal would implement an 18-inch minimum length limit. The change is necessary because Marine Creek Reservoir has been selected to be involved in the Operation World Record research project.

The project will involve stocking coded-wire tagged largemouth bass and monitoring their growth for a minimum of five years following stocking. The stocked bass are ShareLunker offspring and are valuable, considering the limited number that will be produced and their importance to the project.

The ShareLunker program allows anglers to loan largemouth bass weighing 13 pounds or more to the department for spawning and research purposes, which include the study of genetics, life history, growth, performance, behavior, and competition. The increased length limit will protect the stocked bass through at least 18 inches and will increase the department’s ability to evaluate their performance in natural systems.

Add baitfish restrictions in Kinney County: The proposal would add Kinney County to current list of counties where bait fish are restricted to common carp, fathead minnows, gizzard and threadfin shad, golden shiners, goldfish, Mexican tetra, Rio Grande cichlid, silversides (Atherinidae family), and sunfish (*Lepomis*). The restrictions were promulgated to protect endangered pupfish (*Cyprinodon*) in the western Texas.

The proposed change would also protect the Devils River minnow, which only occurs in Val Verde and Kinney counties. Currently, 17 counties in that area, including Val Verde County, have a similar restriction on certain baitfishes.

Allow bowfishermen to take catfish: Another proposal would make bowfishing a legal means for the take of flathead, channel and blue catfish. Bag, possession and size restrictions would mirror current regulations for legal means and methods for harvest.

Public comment about these issues and others of interest may be made to TPWD, Regulatory Proposals Public Comment, 4200 Smith School Road, 78744, by phoning (800) 792-1112 or by visiting www.tpwd.state.tx.us/business/feedback/public_comment.

2006 TPWD Statewide Public Hearing Calendar

SL 2006-01-30

COMMUNICATION DIVISION

The Communications Division is responsible for internal and external communications and marketing. Communication Division staff develops and implements a coordinated communications strategy annually based on priority projects and initiatives. Media products include the TPWD Web site (www.tpwd.state.tx.us), the *Texas Parks & Wildlife* monthly magazine, a weekly PBS television series, the *Passport to Texas* daily radio program, video news reports and a variety of internal and external publications, video products and other public information items. Marketing initiatives include *Big Time Texas Hunts*, *Reel Texas Adventures*, the *Texas Conservation Passport*, and the new conservation license plate series.

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COMMUNICATIONS DIVISION PRODUCTS & SERVICES

PRODUCT/SERVICE	CONTACT PERSON	DESCRIPTION
COMMUNICATIONS DIVISION DIRECTOR	Lydia Saldaña Agency Spokesperson (512) 389-4557 lydia.saldana@tpwd.state.tx.us Pager: (888) 732-9197	Initial contact for media training, major incidents or crises, high profile events involving commissioners or legislators and related items.
PUBLICATIONS		
TEXAS PARKS & WILDLIFE MAGAZINE	Randy Brudnicki, Publisher (512) 912-7001 randy.brudnicki@tpwd.state.tx.us	A magazine dedicated to informing, educating and inspiring Texans about various aspects of TPWD's mission. Approximately 160,000 issues per month sent to subscribers, employees, retirees and constituents.
	Louie Bond, Managing Editor (512) 912-7006 louie.bond@tpwd.state.tx.us	
NEWS & INFORMATION		
	Tom Harvey, Branch Chief (512) 389-4453 tom.harvey@tpwd.state.tx.us Mobile: (512) 565-3679	
THIS WEEK AT TEXAS PARKS & WILDLIFE	Tom Harvey, News Editor (512) 389-4453 tom.harvey@tpwd.state.tx.us Mobile: (512) 565-3679	A one-page, weekly employee newsletter providing a brief summary of news affecting the agency and its employees.
NEWS RELEASE PACKETS	Aaron Reed, News Editor (512) 389-8046 aaron.reed@tpwd.state.tx.us Mobile: (512) 740-3113	Timely information provided to the public via the news media and constituency groups regarding agency programs, issues and activities. Distributed to employees, constituents and media.
STATE PARKS MEDIA COMMUNICATION	Rob McCorkle, Media Relations (830) 866-3533 robert.mccorkle@tpwd.state.tx.us	To promote Texas State Parks to news media
MARKETING SERVICES		
	Darcy Bontempo, Branch Chief (512) 389-4574 darcy.bontempo@tpwd.state.tx.us	
PROMOTIONS	Glenda Beasley, Marketing Manager (512) 389-4794 glenda.beasley@tpwd.state.tx.us	Works on various marketing campaigns for agency, including State Park promotions, Big Time Texas Hunts, Reel Texas Adventures, and Lone Star Legacy.
TPWD EVENTS CALENDAR	Dianne Sebai, Program Assistant (512) 389-4683 dianne.sebai@tpwd.state.tx.us	Promotes state park and other events
INTERNET	Vacant, Web Content Manager	Creating, administering and directing the content and image of the TPWD Internet Web sites and Wildnet.

COMMUNICATIONS DIVISION PRODUCTS & SERVICES

PRODUCT/SERVICE	CONTACT PERSON	DESCRIPTION
CREATIVE SERVICES		
DESIGN/GRAPHICS	Tim Peterson, Creative Director (512) 389-4567 tim.peterson@tpwd.state.tx.us	Developing successful creative projects, materials and campaigns for TPWD internal customers.
PROJECT INITIATION	Kelly Parker (512) 389-4968 kelly.parker@tpwd.state.tx.us	Receiving and coordinating all work submissions for Creative Services, including print design, print and copy.
PUBLICATIONS MANAGER	Karen Blizzard (512) 389-8244 karen.blizzard@tpwd.state.tx.us	Reviews content of agency publications for style, communication strategy and priorities compliance. POC for division publication coordinators regarding publications policy compliance.
PHOTOGRAPHY	Chase Fountain, Archivist (512) 389-4475 chase.fountain@tpwd.state.tx.us	Photographs of people & places relating to TPWD.
MEDIA PRODUCTIONS		
	Richard Roberts, Branch Chief (512) 389-4796 richard.roberts@tpwd.state.tx.us	
VIDEO NEWS REPORTS	Karen Loke, Video Producer (512) 389-4997 karen.loke@tpwd.state.tx.us	Securing placement of TPWD produced news reports in local television news programs statewide, in order to provide TPWD with an unedited pipeline to . viewers 32 television stations receive weekly VNRs.
SPECIAL PROJECTS	Cynthia Griesser (512) 389-4637 cynthia.griesser@tpwd.state.tx.us	Produces Special Project video materials for a variety of field and HQ uses. Projects include training, support and fundraising videos.
PBS TELEVISION SERIES	Don Cash, Executive Producer (512) 389-4792 don.cash@tpwd.state.tx.us	Weekly <i>Texas Parks & Wildlife</i> television program shown on PBS stations.
TRACKS & TRAILS	Karen Blizzard, Editor (512) 389-8244 karen.blizzard@tpwd.state.tx.us	Monthly employee newsletter for employees and retirees of TPWD. Main purpose is to provide accurate and timely information, to instill a sense of pride and community, to recognize accomplishments and showcase the diversity of our employees and their work. 3,800 distributed to employees and retirees.

appendix four

other useful resources

(Note: Web addresses are subject to change)

Electronic and Print Media:

- <http://www.gebbieinc.com/dailyint.htm>
Private business selling lists of contacts at newspapers, TV, radio and Web news outlets.
- <http://www.cnn.com>
CNN's Web site offers live video of CNN broadcasts, and video of news stories. You'll also find text of news stories here
- <http://www.msnbc.com/news/default.asp>
Video, audio and text clips of current news from MSNBC (NBC News)
- <http://www.abctv.com>
ABC Television Network's Web site, with links to it's various news programs and newsmagazines
- <http://www.cbs.com>
CBS Television Network's Web site, with links to it's news programs and news magazines
- <http://www.usatoday.com>
USA TODAY Web site
- <http://www.statesman.com>
The Austin American-Statesman Web site
- <http://www.dallasnews.com>
The Dallas Morning News Web site
- <http://www.chron.com>
The Houston Chronicle Web site

Environmental Organizations and Other Useful Web Resources:

- <http://www.nationalparks.org>
The National Park Foundation
- <http://www.npca.org>
The National Parks and Conservation Association
- <http://www.nrpa.org>
The National Recreation and Park Association.
- <http://www.tnc.org>
The Nature Conservancy

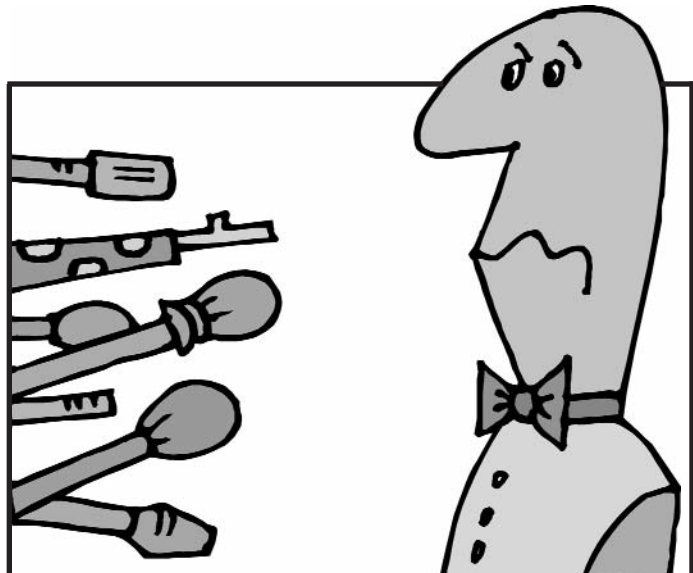
- <http://www.tnc.org/magazine.htm>
The Nature Conservancy Magazine
- <http://www.sierraclub.org>
The Sierra Club Web site
- <http://www.nwf.org>
The National Wildlife Federation
- <http://www.traps.org>
Texas Recreation and Parks
- <http://www.ccatexas.org>
Coastal Conservation Association
- <http://www.texas-wildlife.org>
Texas Wildlife Association
- <http://www.txfishing.com>
Weekly Texas fishing report

texas parks and wildlife department

media communication training

Customized media relations training seminars can be produced on request for your work team. Below is a sample course outline. Contact the News and Information Branch for more information.

- 8:30 a.m. Why media relations? Examples of coverage that affects TPWD
- 8:35 a.m. TPWD HQ resources available for field employees
- Communications Division resources and contacts
 - Legal and law enforcement resources
- 8:40 a.m. Media 101 – How TV, Radio and Newspapers work
- 9:10 a.m. Communicating with the news media
- Coordinating HQ roles with field roles
 - Media relations basics – news releases, interview tips, etc.
- 10:20 a.m. BREAK
- 10:30 a.m. Legal and law enforcement issues
- Confidential information vs. Open Records information
 - When and how to decline to comment on a news story
 - Emergency, accident and criminal scenarios
- 12:00 p.m. LUNCH
- 1:30 p.m. News media interview techniques
- Proactive strategies, defensive tactics
 - Videotaped mock interviews, tape review/critique sessions
- 3:30 p.m. Wrap-up





4200 Smith School Road
Austin, Texas 78744