Capitalizing on the NWCA Report Release to Communicate about Your State/Tribe’s Wetland Work

**Presenter:**
Brenda Zollitsch, Policy Analyst
Association of State Wetland Managers

ASWM Members’ Webinar
February 24, 2016

*Photo Credit: US Environmental Protection Agency*
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Webinar Agenda

Welcome & Introductions
(5 minutes)

Presentation
(40 minutes)

Q&A
(15 minutes)
Today’s Presenter

Brenda Zollitsch, Policy Analyst
Association of State Wetland Managers
Webinar Moderator

Jeanne Christie, Executive Director
Association of State Wetland Managers
Webinar Tech Check-in

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Please contact **Laura Burchill**

[Contact information]

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Capitalizing on the NWCA Report Release to Communicate about Your State/Tribe’s Wetland Work

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NWCA Communications Planning

Presentation Overview

- How a communications plan can help your state capitalize on the release of the NWCA Report
- The importance of proactive communications planning
- Creating a communications strategy
- Using ASWM template documents and communications guidance sheets
- Connecting with states/tribe that has used them to develop their own
Creating NWCA-related Opportunities to Share State/Tribal Wetland Conditions, Efforts and Needs

Opportunities:

• Places wetlands in the spotlight

• Opportunity to showcase your wetland work

• Access to new reference data never had before

• Helps bring attention to needs

• Reason to connect with decision makers on wetland issues

• May make advocacy timely
Considerations:

• How to roll NWCA data and findings into what the state is doing?

• How to use accessible language to convey results to non-experts and the general public?

• How to make NWCA results meaningful at the state level?

• How to relate national/regional NWCA findings to state needs/efforts?
On a good day it’s complicated...
Because a bad media day is only slightly less disturbing than...
Examples of specific benefits from having a Communication Strategy

• **Generate positive publicity** - Increase awareness of wetlands and state efforts

• **Advocate** - For your program needs; to request more resources

• **Clarify** what the NWCA report does/does not do

• **Garner awareness** - Put your wetlands “on the map”

• **Have copy-ready materials** ready to go
Some Additional Benefits You May Not Have Thought About…

• **Provides the chance to plan media opportunities in advance** - Highlight great stories to capitalize on publicity opportunities

• **Develops positive reputation** for being a “go-to” for good media stories

• **Allows you to be the first to the press** - It’s always harder to refute a story than be the lead

• **Lets your administration know where to send inquiries**, as well as who should (and should not) speak to the press

• **Makes it possible for your staff to think ahead** about difficult questions
Which one of these stories would you be more likely to unmute on the TV?
Crafting the Message and Image: Be Prepared with a “Go-To” Story and Talking Points

Example: Dena Greenwood of the Northern Arizona Audubon Society is covered by local news talking about the Arizona’s Sedona Wetlands

- Backdrop
- Setting helps tell the story
- Pre-approval to be at site
- Appropriate clothing, logos
- Prepared with story
- Able to insert talking points

Photo credit: http://www.northernarizonaaudubon.org/?p=1837

Mark Poesch and his research team go to work at a wetland in south Edmonton.
Stories need a beginning, a middle and an end. Having a few key narratives prepared will make you a friend to the media and increases the likelihood that your messaging stays on point.
Elements of a Communication Strategy
(For Program, Initiative or Report)

- Communication goals
- Desired outcomes
- Target audiences
- Key message(s)

- Delivery mechanisms
- Timing and frequency
- Distribution
- Tracking and evaluation

+ Response plan with chain of contacts

Professor and Student Conducting Wetland Research
Photo Credit: Northland.edu
I already have a communication strategy. I throw things at the internet and hope for the best.
### Section 3: Developing Strategic Communication Plans

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ASWM’s NWCA Communication Guidance and Template Documents

Guidance Documents

• Developing an NWCA Communications Strategy
• Creating a Press Kit
• What You can do to Improve your Social Media Efforts (3 guidance documents)

Templates

• State Fact Sheet
• Legislative Brief
• Administrative Brief
• ASWM Factsheet on 2011 NWCA Public Report

Download from ASWM.org
Science Tab – Monitoring and Assessment Tab

http://www.aswm.org/wetland-science/monitoring-and-assessment
Important Reminders

• These templates have been created by ASWM, not EPA.

• EPA has provided input to them, but they are not formal EPA-documents

• ASWM did not incorporate all suggestions from EPA

• All material in this presentation is in “draft” form and will remain so

• You are responsible for confirming the content of all communications content

• This presentation does not intend to answer questions about the NWCA report or findings

For more information about the NWCA Report, Methods and Findings, contact Gregg Serenbetz from EPA at Serenbetz.Gregg@epa.gov
How to Use the Templates

- Determine your communication needs
- Identify target audience
- Select appropriate templates
- Adapt form and function for your use
- Populate with state-specific information
Target Audiences:
- General Public
- Media
- Useful for internal staff

Factsheet Content:
- What the NWCA is
- What was measured/why
- Overall results
- Stressors associated with lower condition
- Discussion about risk from algal toxins
- Where to go for more information
- Links to NWCA Report and NWCA information

ASWM General Factsheet on NWCA Public Report (.pdf) Designed for Non-technical Audiences

Understanding the Key Findings of the National Wetland Condition Assessment: A Summary for Non-technical Audiences
Compiled by the Association of State Wetland Managers (last revised 2-16-10)

The National Wetland Condition Assessment (NWCA) is an evaluation of the environmental health of the nation's wetlands. The NWCA is carried out every five years and provides an assessment of the nation's wetlands for use by state and local governments. The NWCA is based on a national survey of wetlands, including both natural and restored wetlands.

In addition, information was collected at each sampling location about factors that might affect wetland condition—such as adjacent agricultural activities, the presence of point sources, discharge pipes, livestock removal of plants, presence of invasive plants, or the existence of storms or other structures in or on the wetland, or immediately surrounding the wetland. These factors can change the "condition" of the wetland, leading to poorer ecological health and are referred to as "stressors."

All measurements were taken in a statistically random sample of wetlands nationwide—a total of 1,178 locations. A higher number of sample points were selected where wetlands are more prevalent, but even across areas of the country such as the Midwest and Southwest were included. Less than one percent of the wetland area was surveyed. In total, 318 wetlands were sampled in each state, but not all wetlands were sampled in each state. The NWCA report highlights a number of these state-level studies.

What were the overall results?
The biological condition of this wetland was defined as good, fair, or poor, and ranked as follows: 5% good, 35% fair, and 60% poor condition. The wetland was generally in good condition, but 35% were in fair condition, and 60% were in poor condition. The NWCA data were also evaluated for ecosystem geographic areas: (1) Coastal plains, (2) Eastern mountains and upper Midwest, (3) Interior plains, and (4) West. Of these, the West had the smallest proportion of wetlands in good condition—21%. By contrast, good condition was observed in 25% of wetland area in the East and 35% in the Midwest.

What stressors were associated with lower condition?

Most of the data collected during the NWCA was used to evaluate indicator of stress in wetlands and their relationships to wetland condition. This data was used to help inform on wetland management and restoration priorities to avoid or mitigate degradation of wetlands that provide important human benefits.

- Physical stressors: At the national level, removal of plants, soil compaction ("hardening"), ditching, damming, filling, and vegetation replacement (e.g. with a crop or a lawn) were associated with poor biological condition. Wetlands with high levels of plant removal and harvesting were the least likely to have poor biological condition. If these stressors were eliminated, the study suggests up to 20% of wetland area currently in poor condition based on the plant indicator would improve to good or fair condition.
- Chemical stressors: The study measured the presence of heavy metals and high levels of soil phosphorus as indicators of chemical stress. In 66-73% of wetlands in the nation, the level of stress resulting from these factors was low. A moderate level of stress from heavy metals was found in the Eastern Mountains, Upper Midwest (31% of wetland area), and the West (27% of wetland area).
- Biological stressors: Non-native plants were evaluated as a source of biological stress. Nationally, non-native stress was found at low levels in 61% of the wetland area. However, this was not true in the West, where high or very high non-native plant stress was observed in 71% of the wetland areas.

Do wetlands pose a risk from algal toxins?
Certain types of algae can produce a toxic material known as "toxins" that can be harmful to wildlife and humans. This chemical has been found in some wetlands, limiting human use. The National Wetland Condition Assessment provides information nationally, and based on data collected by the World Health Organization, very few wetland area was found to be at risk of exposure from algae.

For More Information: This brief summary provides only a portion of the information available in the NWCA reports. Additional facts sheets providing a general summary are also available.

NWCA Website: http://water.epa.gov/wetlands/nwca/index.cfm
NWCA Public Report: [Download here]
State Factsheet Template Highlighting Release of NWCA Report

**Target Audience:**
- Media
- General Public

**Factsheet Content**
- Why the state’s wetlands are important
- What the NWCA is
- Key NWCA findings
- What the NWCA tells us about the state’s wetlands
- A call to protect the state’s wetlands
- Specific actions asking them to take
- Contact information for follow-up
- State website link

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**FACTSHEET**

(State Name) Wetlands and the Release of the National Wetland Condition Assessment (NWCA)

**Why are (State’s) Wetlands Important?**
- Commercial fishing in (State) is a $2 billion industry that employs 30,000 local residents. Sport fishing and hunting are important activities to the local and national economies, where outdoor recreation is a $10 billion industry employing another 70,000 residents. The majority of commercial and sport fish industry and port activities depend on wetlands for habitat.
- Thousands of birds and mammals in (State) rely on wetlands as valuable habitat, whether it be for nesting, roosting, or seasonal movement.

**What does the NWCA tell us about (State Name) Wetlands?**
- More than 8 percent of (State)’s land area is wetlands. Our wetlands provide us with critical functions and support a significant portion of our state’s economy.

**What We Need from You:**
- Encourage adoption of federal and state laws protecting wetlands
- Support funding for monitoring and assessment
- Educate local officials

**For More Information:**
Contact Bob Smith at the State Water Program, Call (123) 123-1234 or email bob.smith@state.gov

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**What is the National Wetland Condition Assessment?**
- The National Wetland Condition Assessment (NWCA) is a statistical survey of the quality of nation’s wetlands. The purpose of the survey is to generate statistically valid and environmentally relevant reports on the condition of the Nation’s water resources. The first was conducted in 2011 and the final report was published in [date].
- The NWCA is being used:
  - To determine the national, regional condition of wetlands
  - To promote collaboration across jurisdictional boundaries
  - To build and sustain capacity for monitoring and analysis
  - To achieve a robust, statistically valid set of wetland data
  - To develop baseline information to evaluate progress
Legislative Brief Template for the Release of NWCA Report

Target Audience
- Senators and Representatives
- Congressional Staffers

Administrative Brief Content
- Information about the state’s wetlands
- NWCA Report information and key findings
- How NWCA relates to state work to protect wetlands
- What we need to accomplish in the state
- Actions we hope you will take to protect the state’s wetlands
- Where to go to get answers for your questions

Key findings from the NWCA study include:
- Add here
- Add here
- Add here
- Add here
- Add here

How the NWCA relates to our state’s work to protect wetlands in (State Name):
- Add here
- Add here
- Add here

What We Need to Accomplish in the (State Name):
- More public awareness of the value of (state’s) wetlands
- Better compliance with rules and regulations that protect wetlands
- Increased monitoring & assessment to target resources more effectively

Actions we hope YOU will take to protect our state’s wetlands:
- Add here
- Add here

Please Direct Questions about the NWCA Report/State Wetlands to:
- Add here

(State) Wetland Program
Primary Contact: Joe Wetlands, State Coordinator; Address: State Drive, City, State, Zip; Email/Phone: jwetlands@state.gov.
(111) WET-LANDS
Administrative Brief Template for the Release of NWCA Report

Target Audience:
- State Government Leadership
- State Administrative and Communications Staff

Internal Administrative Brief Content
- Overview of NWCA
- Key Findings of the NWCA Study
- How NWCA relates to state’s efforts to protect wetlands
- Actions we want the state and its citizens to take to protect and restore wetlands
- Where to get answers for state wetland and NWCA questions
- What wetlands are and the importance of wetlands in the state
- Biggest threats to the state’s wetlands
- What we need to do in order to better protect the state’s wetlands
- Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)
Considerations for Using Templates

- Careful use of language
- Avoid acronyms, technical language/jargon
- Vette through proper channels
- Leave enough time to get approvals (2-3 months on average)
- Identify strategy for incoming comments and questions from the materials
Creating a Press Kit

Target Audience:

- Press/Media
- State Communications Staff

Press Kit Should Include:

- Letter of Introduction
- Factsheet on NWCA & Wetlands Status
- Program Services
- Current news
- A media-ready story

NWCA Communications Guidance

PRESS KITS

Letter of Introduction — This should be your lead-off piece, which includes:
- Why they should care about this information
- Table of contents of what is in the kit
- A call-to-action
- Include your program’s logo

NWCA and State Wetlands Status
One page, easy to digest, outlining:
- A brief summary of the NWCA and its goals
- Your state’s wetland stats (original acres, acres lost, etc.)
- How the results compare to what state has found/achieved
- A basic summary your program (incl. mission statement and primary goals related to this issue)
- Call to action based on needs in your state (Less than 5 actions you want to be taken, by whom)
- Include ample high-quality images of wetlands (action shots of people working in wetlands or wetlands in obvious need – to a non-expert of restoration)

Program Services — You should include a list of all of your program’s services (and products if you have them), as well as the benefits of each. May want to make this a brochure.

Current News — Anything newsworthy regarding your program should be included. If you’ve had any articles published on other websites, have been interviewed, or if you’ve partnered with other agencies or nonprofits, be sure to list those activities and include any relevant materials (or links)

Contact Information — Each piece of the press kit should individually include contact information, including one point person, address, email and telephone number that is checked regularly

Media-ready Story - Have one or more stories that make the points that you are trying to share that have a photographic quality to them (a pre-approved/arranged site visit or ready-to-go high quality images you can give upon request). Make sure you have several high quality action shots of your staff working in wetlands.

ASWM Guidance: Hints for Successful Interviews – Adapted from ACEP

Photo credit: Everglades National Park
Social Media Toolbox for NWCA Communications
Factsheet #1:
What You can do to Improve your Social Media Efforts

• What tools do social media offer your Wetland Program for sharing about the NWCA report?

• Which are the most useful social media sites for sharing NWCA information?

• What you may want to share through social media

• Tips on Increasing Likelihood Visitors will return to your sites

IMPORTANT:
Social Media is only as useful as the resources you can invest
What is high quality web-based content and why is it important?

Ten things you can do to improve your content

Increasing traffic to your content

Pitfalls to avoid
Social Media Toolbox for NWCA Communications

Factsheet #3:
Targeting and Timing Your Electronic Media Posts

Contains an extensive grid outlining marketing research-based recommendations for targeting and timing messages using different electronic media tools, including blogging, social media, emails, etc.

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<th>Electronic Media Tool</th>
<th>Target Audience</th>
<th>Optimal Day of the Week</th>
<th>Optimal Time of Day</th>
<th>Types of Message</th>
<th>Frequency of Posts</th>
<th>Important Reminders</th>
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<tr>
<td>Twitter (Microblogging) 560 million</td>
<td>Microblogging (widely used by younger audiences)</td>
<td>Weekends are preferable</td>
<td>Around 5 pm; during week also commuting times (9 am, 12 pm and 5 pm)</td>
<td>Under 100 characters</td>
<td>May want to post multiple tweets of the same posts at the key commuter times throughout the day</td>
<td>Don’t add more than 2 hashtags to a tweet (annoying) Don’t use max characters every post</td>
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<td>Google+ (Social networking) 400 million</td>
<td>Able to select “circles” of people with common interests/target groups of acquaintances</td>
<td>Thursdays and Fridays</td>
<td>Early Afternoon (not beyond 9 am – 7 pm)</td>
<td>Include photos and graphics</td>
<td>Minimum of 2x/week</td>
<td>Post often enough; respond to comments</td>
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<tr>
<td>LinkedIn (Business networking) 240 million</td>
<td>75% of users are over the age of 35; professionals</td>
<td>Any</td>
<td>Sharing with other professionals</td>
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<td>YouTube</td>
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<td>Post videos</td>
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QUESTIONS?

For more information:

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