

From Message to Media:

How Districts Can Amplify Impact Through Local Outreach

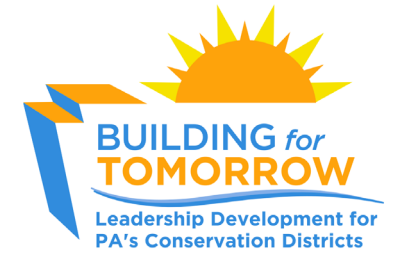
Presented by

Piper Strategies

February 18, 2026



Learning Objectives



You Will Learn...

How to work with the media to get your message out and establish your organization as a trusted voice on local conservation issues.

Take Aways

1

How to create effective media materials

2

How to identify and organize media contacts

3

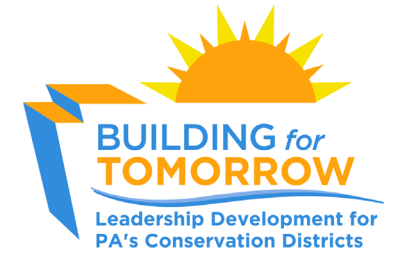
How to engage with media and build relationships

Agenda

- Understanding media relations
- Who are you trying to reach?
- How do I share my news?
- Who do I send my news to?
- How do I send my news
- Wrap-up and Q&A



Why does media relations matter?



Raises awareness
of issues

Mobilizes community
support

Positions you
as trusted expert

Builds credibility
with stakeholders

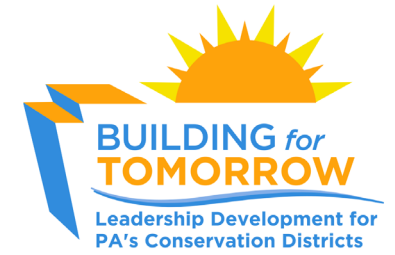
What is “Good Media Relations?”

“It’s not what
you say, it’s
what they
hear”

- Building relationships with journalists and securing positive media coverage
- Building trust with reporters – make their jobs easier
- Reaching your audience through the media outlets they actually use



How do I do media relations right?



- Define your audience
- Create outreach materials that work
- Identify the media and journalists that will reach them
- Send your news to maximize the chance it gets seen
- Build trusted relationships with key journalists

**Who are you trying
to reach?**

Defining Your Audience

- Define the goal of each media outreach effort
- Decide who you want to reach
- What media outlets do they use?



**How do I share my
news?**

Press Release



An official announcement that provides all the elements needed for a news story

Media Advisory



An invitation to cover an event

Media Pitch



A personalized story idea sent to a journalist

Opinion Content



Op-eds, letters to the editor, bylines and guest articles

What Is a Press Release?

- A formal announcement shared with the media
 - Written like a short news article
 - Used to announce newsworthy developments
- Launching a new conservation initiative
 - Announcing a major grant or funding award
 - Releasing new research or environmental data
 - Sharing leadership changes or major milestones
 - Promoting a large public event after it happens

Press Release Structure

INVERTED PYRAMID

- What's happening?
- When is it happening?
- Why is it happening?
- Who is in charge?
- Where is it happening?



The most important information first

Secondary details



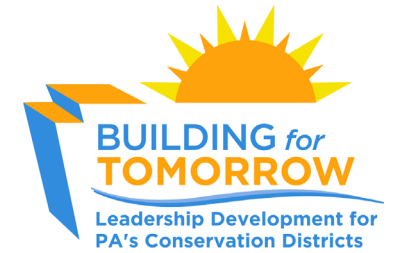
**Additional
Info**



- Quotes
- Supporting statistics
- Example or anecdote
- Other details in descending order of importance

- Boilerplate copy
- Times and dates for an event
- Who to contact with questions
- Links to additional info, photos or video

Press Release Structure



Conserving Natural Resources for Our Future

[Find templates and examples on the PACD website!](#)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Date: (insert date)

Contact: Carla Conservationist

Telephone: (987) 654-3210

E-mail: carla.conservationist@localcd.org

Website: www.localcd.org

NEWS: Stream Restoration Work to be on Display during Project Tour

Tour to highlight three projects that reduce erosion, flooding, and water pollution

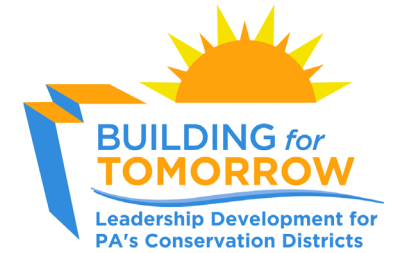
(Local County, Pennsylvania) Local Conservation District plans to hold a tour of three stream restoration projects in Local County on November 10, 2018. The tour will highlight project successes and best practices to reduce erosion, flooding, and water pollution. The three projects to be featured were all completed within the last two years along Piney Creek. Volunteers and partners worked to restore just over 1,000 yards of stream.

"It's our hope that this tour will lead to similar projects in the future with other farmers in our county," said Councilman Steve Slicktalker.

What is a Media Advisory?

- A short alert that invites media to attend an event
- Sent before the event
- Answer the 5 W's
 - Who, What, When, Where, Why
 - Press conferences
 - Rallies or demonstrations
 - Public forums or town halls
 - Tree plantings, cleanups, site visits
 - Events with strong visuals or speakers

Media Advisory Structure



Conserving Natural Resources for Our Future

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Date: (insert date)

Contact: Carla Conservationist

Telephone: (987) 654-3210

E-mail: carla.conservationist@localcd.org

Website: www.localcd.org

Media Advisory: Stream Restoration Ribbon Cutting

Who: Fred Farmer, Fearless Farms
Carla Conservationist, Local Conservation District
Steve Slicktalker, County Councilman

What: Showcasing a Stream Restoration Project

Where: Fearless Farms, 123 County Road, Small Town, Pennsylvania 98765

When: Tuesday, October 5th, 2018, 9:00 a.m.

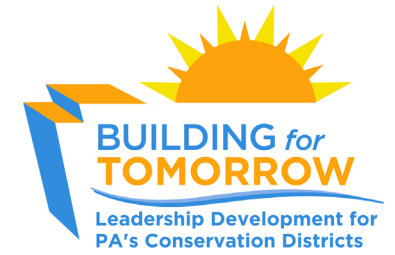
Why: Commemorating the completion of a restoration project along 300 yards of Piney Run

Photos: Media can take photos of the ribbon cutting ceremony, the Piney Run streamsite, and any wildlife that happen to be in the area. Event organizers will provide "before" pictures of the site prior to the restoration project. The Conservation District will stage scientific water sampling in Piney Run to illustrate the downstream benefits of this project.

The Local Conservation District will commemorate the completion of a restoration project along 300 yards of streambank along on Piney Run, which runs through Fearless Farms. Two years in the making, the project is a win-win for Fearless Farms and downstream communities. Fearless Farms will benefit from reduced streambank erosion that was slowly eating away valuable pasture. Downstream neighbors will enjoy cleaner water and reduced flooding downstream of the restoration site.

What it is a Media Pitch?

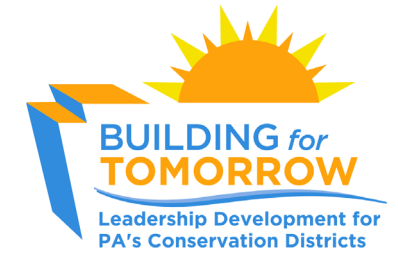
- A short, personalized email or message to a journalist
 - Suggests a story idea, not just an announcement
 - With or without a press release
- Commenting on a new environmental policy
 - Offering expert insight on a weather or climate trend
 - Sharing a local success story
 - Tying your mission to a seasonal issue (wildfire season, water shortages, Earth Day)



Media Pitch Structure

- Keep it to 2–3 SHORT paragraphs – less is more
- Lead with the hook (most compelling angle)
- Use a clear, concise subject line
- Offer interviews, visuals, or data
- AI is great for creating DRAFTS

Sample Pitch Email



Hi [Reporter's Name],

I wanted to flag a feel-good, locally grounded story that may be of interest to your readers.

This week, the Local Conservation District and Fearless Farms completed a stream restoration project along Piney Creek that's already reducing erosion on a working family farm while improving water quality and flood conditions for downstream neighbors. Using natural stabilization methods, the team restored 300 yards of streambank, planted hundreds of trees, and installed fencing to protect the creek from livestock.

What makes this project compelling is the human and community angle: a farmer who was watching his land disappear into the creek, a small conservation district coordinating engineering and funding, and measurable downstream benefits for nearby residents. Early monitoring already shows cleaner water below the site, with even greater improvements expected as the trees mature.

This could be a strong in-depth local story on how conservation, agriculture, and community interests can align—especially in a county that values both farming and clean waterways. Sources are available, including the landowner, conservation district staff, and local officials.

Happy to share additional details or help coordinate interviews if useful. You can reach me at 321-555-5555.

Best regards,

Conserving Natural Resources for Our Future

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Date: (insert date)

Contact: Carla Conservationist
Telephone: (987) 654-3210
E-mail: carla.conservationist@localcd.org
Website: www.localcd.org

NEWS: Piney Run Restoration Benefits Local Farm, Downstream Neighbors
Successful project reduces erosion, flooding, and water pollution

(Local County, Pennsylvania) The Local Conservation District and Fearless Farms finished restoring 300 yards of stream along Piney Creek this week. The project solves erosion headaches for the landowner while reducing flood and water pollution problems for downstream neighbors. The partners stabilized the streambank using natural methods and planted hundreds of trees. They also installed 300 yards of fencing to protect the area from livestock.

"I've been v
what to do a
knowing tha
they take ov

ChatGPT Prompt:

Use the press release below to create a short pitch email for an in-depth story to a local daily newspaper. The tone should be helpful, friendly and professional, emphasizing value of the news for readers.

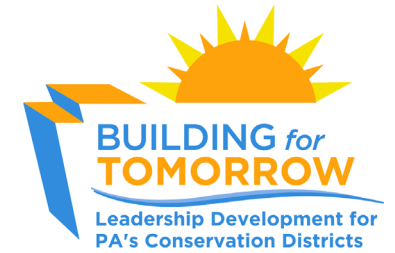
What is Opinion Content?

- Op-Eds, Letters to the Editor, Guest Articles
 - Content written by you that expresses a point of view
 - Published in newspapers, online outlets, or community publications
 - Focused on persuasion, insight, and public education

- You control the message
- Ideal for complex environmental issues
- Builds credibility and visibility for your organization
- Influences public opinion and decision-makers

What's the Difference?

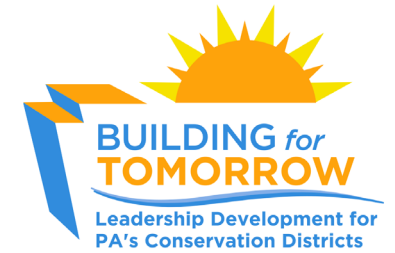
- **Op-Eds & (Opinion Editorials)**
 - Longer-form opinion pieces (typically 600–800 words)
 - Offer analysis, solutions, or a strong point of view
 - Often written by nonprofit leaders or subject matter experts
- **Letters to the Editor**
 - Short and timely (usually 150–250 words)
 - Respond to a recent article or local issue
 - Great for quick reactions or reinforcing a message
- **Guest Articles**
 - Longer form (comply to standard for each outlet)
 - Pitch idea in advance



How to Pitch an Op-Ed to an Editor

- **Step 1: Pick the Right Outlet**
 - Look for opinion, commentary, or community voices sections
 - Tie your piece to current news or a seasonal moment – local impact matters most
- **Step 2: Write a Short Pitch Email**
 - 3–5 sentences is enough
 - Clearly state the argument of the op-ed, explain why it matters now and locally
 - Include who is writing it and why they're credible
 - If it's time-sensitive, note that in the subject line
- **Step 3: Follow the Rules**
 - Check word limits and submission guidelines
 - Submit to only one outlet at a time (unless stated otherwise)
 - Include full contact information and a short bio
 - Only time an attachment is OK
- **Step 4: Follow Up**
 - If you haven't heard back in 5–7 days, one polite follow-up is okay, then can pitch to others if no response

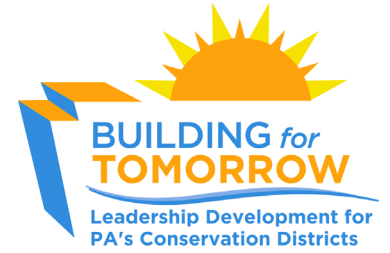
Who do I send it to?



Building a General Media List

- Local newspapers, television, radio stations, general news websites.
- Don't forget business, environmental and other audience-specific media
- Podcasts, social media and content creators belong on your list too!
- Make a broad List – but send selectively

Finding the Right People For Your List



- Identify the best people at each media outlet – reporters with an identified beat, people who have recently covered similar topics, editors, or other gatekeepers.
- Utilize Search Tools: Use Google to find relevant articles, LinkedIn to find journalists' roles, and X (formerly Twitter) to find their contact preferences and interests.
- Follow corporate relationships – many outlets “share” reporters
- Keep it updated – allows you to move quickly when you need to

Organizing Your List

- Software tools that research and organize your media lists (Cision, Meltwater, MuckRack, Prowly/Semrush)
- If you have a CRM or database program, that can be part (make sure you have a way to tag people as media)
- Easiest, and most inexpensive is an Excel or Google Sheets spreadsheet.
- Create a Structured Spreadsheet: Organize your data with columns for: Name, Outlet, Beat/Topic, Email, Social Media Handles, and Notes.
- Segment Your List: Categorize contacts by industry, type (e.g., reporter, blogger), and relevance to tailor your pitches.
- Keep it Up to Date: Continuously update your list to keep it accurate, removing outdated contacts to avoid high bounce rates.

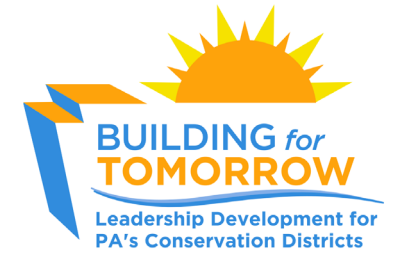
Info to Capture in a Media List

- Media Type (newspaper, magazine, tv, radio, blog, etc)
- Media Outlet Name
- Ownership
- Circulation/Audience size (ask for advertising kit)
- Outlet Website
- Outlet Social media (can have multiple tabs)
- Publication Frequency
- Journalist Name
- Journalist Title
- Journalist Email
- Journalist Phone
- Journalist Social Media
- Notes
- Columns for each outreach effort you conduct

[Find a
template on
the PACD
website!](#)

You can also build tabs in your spreadsheet to track media inquiries and “hits”

**How do get my news
to media contacts?**



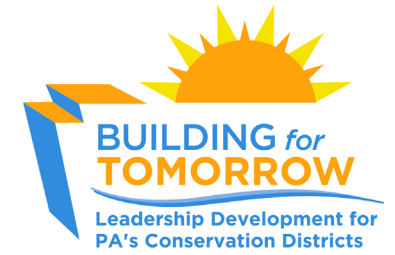
Technical Tips on Sending to Media

- "Pay and Spray" is not your friend
 - PR Newswire and similar services don't usually generate real coverage
 - SEO benefit is declining
- Personalized emails work best
 - Journalists spam filters are usually very strong
 - BCC or too many names in the TO field will trigger
 - Copy, paste and tweak to send individual emails to each reporter
 - For large lists, you can use email merge
 - Microsoft Office from desktop
 - Google Workspace Marketplace has third-party add-ons

**How do I build
relationships with the
media?**

Can Media Find You?

- Have a newsroom section on your website that:
 - Gives a name and contact information for media
 - Shares recent press releases and "In the News"
 - Offers links to leadership bios and any general video/resources for key topics
- If you don't have a dedicated section, add media contact information on "Contact" or "About Us" pages.
- Coordinate with county media/public affairs teams to maximize impact.
- Sign up for Qwoted, SourceOfSources, HARO



“One-and-Done” Doesn’t Do It

- Better chance for coverage if you put in the work to build a relationship to become a trusted source
- Follow and engage with key media contacts on social media
 - LinkedIn, X, Bsky, Reddit, Substack
 - Set up google alerts
 - Like and comment on any relevant pieces
- Introduce yourself via email if you/they are new... “If you ever need info, happy to help”

Questions?

Appendix A

Writing Tips

What makes a good press release?

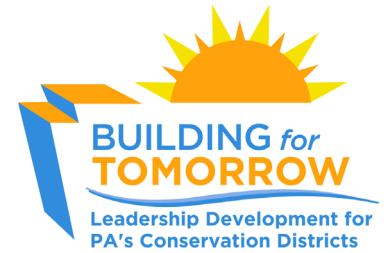
■ Do

- Lead with impact, not internal details
- Focus on community benefit
- Use plain language (avoid jargon and acronyms)
- Include data, examples, or third-party validation
- Include a quote that adds insight or emotion

■ Don't

- Use overly promotional language
- Put long background sections up top
- Assume reporters already know your issue

What makes a good media advisory?

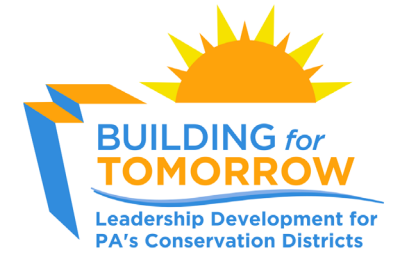


■ Do

- Emphasize what makes the event newsworthy
- Highlight visuals and interview opportunities
- Keep it short - If a journalist can't scan it in 30 seconds, it's too long
- Include "Can't attend" options (contact for video footage, etc.)

■ Don't

- Include explanations or background paragraphs
- Make its sound like a sales pitch
- Send it to people who don't cover your issue



What makes a good media pitch?

- Connect to a timely or trending issue
- Affect the local community
- Highlight conflict, solutions, or impact
- Are tailored to the specific outlet
- Personalization Matters:
 - Reference the journalist's beat or recent work
 - Adjust tone for print, TV, radio, or online

Writing Tips for Opinion Content

■ Do

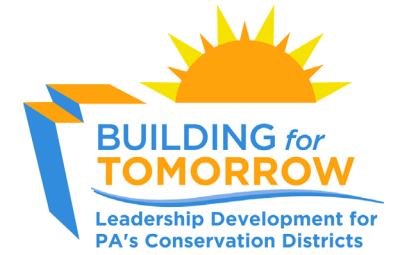
- Lead with a clear opinion or argument
- Connect the issue to local people and places
- Use real-world examples, not technical language
- End with a solution or call to action

■ Avoid

- Sounding like a press release
- Overloading with data or jargon
- Making it about your organization instead of the issue

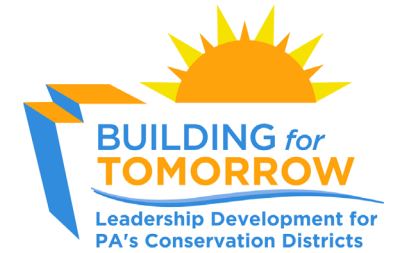
Appendix B

Expanding Your Media List



Another Tab: Tracking Inquiries

- Date
- Media outlet
- Media Type
- Reporter name
- Nature of inquiry
- How you responded – include name of anyone interviewed or offered for quotes
- Link to any coverage
- Notes



Another Tab: Tracking “Hits”

- Date
- Media Type
- Media Outlet
- Reporter Name
- Article/Segment title
- Description/name of expert quoted
- Link to coverage
- Metrics (# of viewers/subscribers/readers/monthly visits, ad costs)

Appendix C

Engaging with Media

When Media Call You

- Be polite and helpful
- Make sure you get return contact info and deadlines
- You don't have to answer right away –
 - Let me gather some information and I'll get back to you as quickly as possible. When do you need it by?
 - I'm not the best person to speak on this. Offer another person or additional information.

Interview Tips

- Prepare in advance
 - Look at previous interviews to get a sense of style – match your tone to theirs
 - Anticipate questions and create bullet points for answers
 - Don't read from a prepared script
 - Practice with someone asking you questions

- Frame key quotable messages with intro phrases:
 - The most important factor. . .
 - What we hear most from ____ is . . .
 - The bottom line is . . .
 - The key point is . . .
 - The best part about . . .
 - The three most exciting elements are . . .

Difficult or Off-Topic Questions

- Don't be afraid to pause
 - “Hmmm... Let me think about this for a second”
 - If not live: “I can't answer that right now. Can I get that information and get back to you.”

- Don't be argumentative – “bridge” back to your messages
 - “That's an interesting point, but I think it's more relevant that. . .”
 - “The broader issue is . . .”
 - “Our focus has really been on . . .”
 - “That's not my area of expertise, but what I can tell you is . . .”
 - “Let me put it in perspective . . .”
 - “That's not really something I'm prepared to talk about today, but I do think it's important that....”

Breaking or Negative News

- If the decision is to engage, your response must be:
 - Fast (Real Time)
 - Accurate
 - Sincere
 - Trustworthy

- Be Prepared
 - Anticipate possible crises – have a plan with “tough questions” answered
 - Identify communications chain – who is authorized to comment, what do others do if they answer the phone or are asked a question by media

When You're On-Camera

- Keep answers short
 - 2-3 short sentences at most
 - **9 seconds is average soundbyte!**
- Visuals matter
 - Sit up straight, Sit on the edge of your seat and lean forward. If you sit back, you look passive, lazy and too relaxed.
 - Stand straight, feet apart, one foot in front of the other so you don't sway back and forth. Hands out of pockets. No crossed arms
 - Look at the camera
 - Viewers' eyes should be on what you're saying, wearing. Solid clothing, small patterns, simple jewelry

