

Field Tours: An Opportunity Not to be Missed

Guidance for WFLC Members

March 16, 2009



A field tour can be a vital component to your Congressional outreach. Further, it can be just the experience needed to help partners, including congressional staffers and delegates, understand important issue and build and improve relationships. With some planning and a clear focus your tour can have a huge impact on attendees and your messages will be stronger and more effective. The following are some suggestions to help you plan along with several templates for your use. The WFLC staff is also available to discuss issues and provide resources.

Field tours need to be focused. Simplicity is key. Attendees not only look at field tours as opportunities to learn about present and future issues, but also as an opportunity to get away for a while. Therefore, one of the underlying themes should be fun and easy touring.

Purpose: Demonstrate to key Congressional Members and staff on-the-ground examples of current forestry in the west. This is an opportunity to highlight work occurring in your state/area that links to one of the top issues of the day.

Who: Congressional Members and staff from all over the country. Special effort should be placed on the relevant Congressional Committees that are concerned with your issues (Appropriations, Agriculture, Resources, Water) and Members in-state. You should strive to secure anywhere from five to ten attendees.

When: The August recess provides the best opportunity to get staff out in the field, but any extended Congressional recess (Spring, July, December, etc.) is a good time to hold a field tour. If there is a critical issue happening, seize the opportunity to plan a tour using the provided templates. The return on your investment of time will be worth the effort.

Partnering: The most effective field tour will bring in the viewpoints of partners and constituents. This means showing all sides of the issue. Attendees will walk away with a broader understanding of the issues and will be appreciative of the openness.

Getting people to attend: Anticipate the prospective attendees' goals and try to meet their needs. Often Members of Congress and their staffers attend a field tour because someone recommended they be in attendance. Don't be shy to use your contacts or the WFLC's contacts. Congressional Members and staff attend for the following reasons:

- 1) To better understand an important issue to their committee and/or district and relevant at that time;
- 2) To network with professionals from your agency (so be certain key forestry professionals also attend);
- 3) To be able to relay clear, concise information to the Congressional delegates they work for with recommended actions.

Preparation: Ideally, planning for a field tour should begin about three months prior to the tour date. However, there have been some very successful last minute tours so don't be dissuaded if an opportunity arises with a shorter time frame.

- **Who is in charge?** – Designate a lead organizer to coordinate and pull together all preparation materials, preferably someone within the region or state.
- **Invitations – Show enthusiasm and urgency.** These can go out anywhere from two weeks to two months ahead and plan for follow-up calls or letters as the tour date approaches. Invitations should sound exciting - an opportunity not to be missed - and should contain outlined logistical info, issues to be covered and a draft agenda. Be sure to include an RSVP page that can be faxed, phoned or emailed back to you. (see Sample A)
- **Confirmation information** – Once you receive an RSVP, you will want to send the attendee a letter thanking them for coming and providing pertinent and detailed logistical information. This letter can be combined with the briefing packet (see next bullet point) if it is ready at that time. The confirmation information includes everything the attendee will need to plan and pack for their adventure such as: the itinerary, transportation, accommodations, what to wear, bring, other activities in the area, etc. (see sample B)
- **Briefing Packets** – These are what the attendees walk away with; make sure they contain your take-home messages. Send briefing packets out prior to your guest's arrival allows attendees to read the packets en route. However, don't count on the attendees to bring theirs- always have additional packets available for them as well as last minute attendees. The packets should include short, concise descriptions of all tour stops, relevant background materials and short, concise key messages. A participant list is an important part of the briefing packet and will be key for future networking.

Other than the attendees' impressions, which can fade over time, the briefing packet is what they will be taking back to Washington, DC. Briefing packages should cover the subject, but not be verbose as too much information is easily ignored. Contact information for follow-up questions and more information is an important part of the packet.

- **Media** – The tour can provide an excellent media opportunity. However, if frank and open dialogue is one of your objectives, media should be invited another time. If press opportunities are made available, it's a good idea to have a plan ready so that other attendees do not wait while an interview is taking place.



- **Travel & Transportation** – Attendees should be encouraged to permit the lead organizer to set up plane and lodging reservations for them (perhaps via a designated travel agent). If not, send out clear instructions for transportation and hotel options as it will make accounting much easier in the long run. Tour locales should be easily reached via air transport to ensure attendance.
- **Food** – Sponsorships of food and beverage from outside groups for all breaks and meals can be pursued where appropriate. Just be sure that sponsorships don't impact the credibility of the tour. Don't forget to provide water throughout the tour, your attendees will forget to bring their own!

Touring: Some ideas to keep in mind while on the tour:

- **Agenda** – Care must be taken to balance not tiring the attendees with not boring them. Keep the day fast-paced, well organized and plan for bathroom stops. One-day trips fit best with the attendees’ busy schedules. Again, balance is the key- minimize drive time, yet visit the most appropriate and stimulating sites for the tour.
- **Facilitators and Guest Speakers** – It is important to have forestry professionals for attendees to network with and to provide expert advice throughout the tour. Prepare the professionals and speakers ahead of time. Let them know what to talk about and for how long and you should consider designating a tour facilitator who keeps the talk on time and facilitates discussion.
- **Facilitate Discussion and Questions** – As facilitator, try to ask your attendees questions such as: “What do you think is the greatest risk of..., or “How many acres in our state do you think...” It is always more engaging to use the Socratic (question/answer) method of delivering information than lecturing to the attendees throughout the tour.
- **Diversionsary Tactics** – Some attendees may be in attendance for a little diversion from their daily routines. When you can meet the objectives of the tour make the tour locale a popular destination (landmarks, resorts, etc.) or include options for an activity (fishing, rafting/canoeing, etc.) pre or post tour. This will give a continued opportunity for group interaction and networking.
- **Get Down and Dirty** – These folks work in stuffy, sterile offices- try to get their arms unfolded and hands out of their pockets to touch and feel their new environment.



- **Door-Prizes/Giveaways** – These can be fun and can serve as reminders to attendees of the tour and how informative and interesting it was and the benefits of taking the time to attend.

Follow-Up:

- **Feedback sheet** – How did it go? Preparation of a feedback sheet asking attendees to indicate lessons learned and suggested improvements is very helpful. If time allows, consider a wrap-up session to close the tour to garner the attendee’s feedback before they depart. (see sample C)
- **Thank you letters** – Thank you letters need to be sent as a follow-up. Not only are they important for etiquette reasons, they also leave the door open for future contacts. (see sample D)

Checklist for Preparing a Successful Field Tour

Field Tour _____

TASK	“ ✓ ”(DATE)	NOTES
Choose topic and sites and dates		
Prepare draft agenda		
Prepare invitations		
Send invitations with agenda that includes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Objectives/focus ○ Areas to be visited ○ Organizations that will be represented ○ RSVP 		
Invite speakers		
Confirm and prepare speakers		
Follow-up calls to invitees		
Travel plans		
Accommodation plans		
Meal plans (food/snacks/water)		
Confirm attendee numbers		
Prepare confirmation letters <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Agenda & itinerary ○ What to wear, bring, etc.. ○ Trip logistics ○ Participant list- to be updated before the trip 		
Prepare briefing packets <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Background information ○ Short descriptions of each area ○ Key messages ○ May include feedback form 		
Send out briefing packets with agenda and all logistics		
Alert media		
Prepare feedback forms		
Implement successful tour		
Send out thank you letters		

Sample A

Your logo here-

October 17, 2008

Smokey Bear Jr.

Department Operations, Oversight, Nutrition and Forestry Subcommittee 1430
Longworth House Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Smokey:

The Western Forestry Leadership Coalition would like to invite you to attend a field tour to examine first hand federal and private forest management in the Pacific Northwest. We have scheduled our field trip during the Memorial Day Congressional recess for May 30 - June 2. The tour will be based out of the Hilton Hotel in Eugene, Oregon. We will make all the arrangements and provide for lodging and transportation as needed.

The first and last days of the tour are for travel. The evening of the first night, the WFLC will host a small reception to welcome you to the Northwest and provide an opportunity to review any last minute details for the tour. The two field trip days will consist of visiting public and private forest ownerships, viewing forest management activities and many other points of interest.

The tour will address: (1) forest management under existing laws and regulations; (2) ecosystem management and sustained yield forestry; (3) contemporary private and public forest management issues such as old growth, spotted owls, salmon, forest roads and forest health, along with other current issues. Forest Service, state agency, researchers and local industry representatives will provide the briefings and host the tour. The field trip will demonstrate the relationship between federal environmental policy and the viability of the forest products industry. Attached is a tentative itinerary.

We recognize that Congressional recess is often a busy time, but we hope that you can find the time to participate on this worthwhile tour. This is our eleventh year of conducting congressional staff tours, with more than 250 staffers having participated. Please submit the included RSVP document by December 1st to ensure your participation on this exciting field tour to Sarah at sarah@forestry.org. She can also be reached at 303-445-4666 with any questions about tour logistics.

Sincerely,

XXX, State Forester
XXXX

Sample B

Western Forestry Leadership Coalition
Lessons from the Watershed to the Woodshop
December 12-16, 2008
RSVP Deadline - November 1, 2008

Please complete the below form and fax to (303) 239-3811

TO: Sarah, WFLC Business Manager
FAX: (303) 239-3811
RE: Confirmation of Participation in *Watershed to the Woodshop*
Field Tour
DATE:
FROM:
ADDRESS:
PHONE:
FAX:
EMAIL:

_____ I accept the invitation to participate on the *Watershed to the Woodshop* Field Tour in northeastern Oregon December 12-16, 2008

_____ I cannot accept this invitation, but would like to recommend
_____, who may be able to attend

WEATHER AND WHAT TO BRING

Expect the weather to be hot and dry. During the day temperatures will be in the 80's and in the evening it can go down to about 50 degrees. All events and activities require casual clothing and practical shoes.

Suggested items to pack: •

- Sun block
- Sunglasses
- A baseball cap or hat for added shade
- If you are allergic to bees, a bee sting kit
- Allergy medicine if you suffer from hayfever (We will be at dusty sites)
- Moisturizer
- Lip balm
- A light weight sweater or sweatshirt for evenings
- Appropriate shoes: We will not be doing any hiking, just light walking on roads, so sneakers or light weight boots will be sufficient

AIRPORT LOGISTICS

Participants Flying Into Portland Airport:

Where to Meet: Baggage Claim. A representative of the Western Forestry Leadership Council will be waiting in the baggage claim section for you. The sign will say "WFLC."

What to do if your flight is delayed: WFLC will have all your flight information so we will check the status of your flight. However, if you are delayed or miss a flight, please call Sarah Wagon at (303) 445-4362.

Phone Numbers Where You Will Be: While on the tour your office will be able to reach you a number of different ways. Cell phones have limited reception in many of the tour stops but you can use the hotel, Wallowa Resources Office or WFLC staff to relay messages. If you will need to receive an urgent fax while on the tour we suggest you have it sent to Wallowa Resources office. They will make sure you get it.

Ponderosa Motel:	(541) 426-3186 Fax (541) 426-
Wallowa Resources	(541) 426-8053 Fax (541) 426-
Sustainable Northwest	(503) 221-6911 Fax (503) 221-
Maia Enzer	Cell Phone: (503) 757-7559

Participants flying into other airports: You will have to arrange your own transportation.

DRIVING DIRECTIONS

From Southern Oregon: 1-5 North to 84 East to 82 East. Take 82 into Enterprise. Follow 82 through town, the Ponderosa Motel will be on your left across from the Courthouse.

From Bend: 97 North to 84 East to 82 East into Enterprise. Follow 82 through town, the Ponderosa Motel will be on your left across from the Courthouse.

From Lakeview: 395 North to 26 East to 7 North (towards Baker City) to 84 West to La Grande to 82 East into Enterprise. Follow 82 through town, the Ponderosa Motel will be on your left across from the Courthouse.

From Boise: 84 West to La Grande to 82 East into Enterprise. Follow 82 through town, the Ponderosa Motel will be on your left across from the Courthouse.

From Twisp, WA: South to 395 to 84 East to La Grande, to 82 East into Enterprise. Follow 82 through town, the Ponderosa Motel will be on your left across from the Courthouse.

LODGING INFORMATION

All tour participants will be staying at the Ponderosa Hotel while in Wallowa County. Reservations have been made for you.

Ponderosa Motel 102 E. Greenwood Enterprise, Oregon 97828 Phone (541) 426-3186 Fax (541) 426-8068

For those staying in Portland on Saturday August 25th, reservations have been made at the Hampton Inn at the Portland airport.

Hampton Inn

8633 Northeast Airport Way Portland, Oregon 97220

Phone (503) 288-2423

Fax (503) 2882620

Sample C

WFLC Congressional Staff Tour May 30,
31 & June 1, 2001 Hilton Hotel Eugene,
Oregon Tentative Itinerary

TOUR OBJECTIVE: Show key Congressional Staff on-the-ground examples of issues affecting forest management on public and private lands on the west coast. These include the northern spotted owl, implementation of Clinton's Forest Plan, state forest practice rules, watershed restoration, sustainable forestry, and manufacturing technology.

Wednesday, May 30th

Travel Day: Congressional Staff arrives at Eugene, Oregon airport and travels to the Eugene Hilton.

6:00 - 7:30 p.m. Reception: A small reception will be held where last minute details of the tour can be reviewed and to give participants a chance to meet industry representatives and federal land management agency officials.

Thursday, May 31st

6:30 - 7:30 a.m. Breakfast

7:45 - 8:00 a.m. Load into Vans

8:00 - 9:00 a.m. Travel to Private Land 9:00 -10:00 a.m.

Subject: Oregon Forest Practices Act: History, Evolution and Application

Speaker: Jim Brown, Oregon State Forester & landowner representative

10:00 - 10:30 a.m. Travel to South Station Timber Sale

10:30 - 12:00 p.m.

Subject: The President's Northwest Forest Plan

Speakers: Darrel Kenops, Willamette Forest Supervisor

Jan Burns, Contracting Officer, Middle Fork Ranger District, USFS

12:00 - 12:30 p.m. Travel to Warner Creek Wildfire Area

12:30 - 2:00 p.m. Lunch and Discussion

Subject: 10 Years After a Wildfire with No Restoration Forestry

Speakers: Rick Scott, District Ranger, Middle Fork Ranger District

2:00 – 4:45 p.m. Seneca Sawmills

SAMPLE D

Your letterhead

August 27, 2001

Dear Field Tour Participant:

Thank you for participating in our field tour on Reducing Fire Risks: From the Watershed to the Woodshop. All of you made wonderful contributions and helped to foster a candid dialogue about the issues. We greatly appreciate the time and energy you gave to prepare for this event. Together we have laid the foundation for fruitful future exploration of these difficult issues through legislation, administrative policy, and cultural changes. We look forward to continuing to work together on these issues, and others, as the need arises.

We appreciate your completing the attached evaluation form as monitoring and evaluating the benefits of these tours will help us plan for the next tour even more successfully. Your candid feedback will help us learn what went well and what we could have done better.

Thanks again for being such a wonderful group.

Sincerely,

Jay Jensen, Executive Director
Council of the Western of the Western State Foresters

