



Ohio

Society of American Foresters

Communications Plan

Developed and submitted by the
OSAF Communications Committee
December 2004

SAF MISSION STATEMENT

The Mission of the Society of American Foresters is to advance the science, education, technology, and practice of forestry; to enhance the competency of its members; to establish professional excellence; and to use the knowledge, skills, and conservation ethic of the profession to ensure the continued health and use of forest ecosystems and the present and future availability of forest resources to benefit society.

OSAF Messages/Core Values

- ◆ Forests are a fundamental source of global health and human welfare.
- ◆ OSAF is THE premier scientific and educational association representing the profession of forestry in the Ohio. The Ohio Society of American Foresters is a chapter of the National Society of American Foresters and we embrace the SAF mission statement as our own.
- ◆ We will promote the importance and benefits of sound, sustainable, multiple-use forest management *and* the forester's role in this effort.
- ◆ The Ohio Society of American Foresters recognizes that foresters are uniquely trained professionals who devote their careers to ensuring the health and productivity of Ohio's forests through science-based management. Ohio foresters are a diversified group of individuals encompassing an array of specialties, talents, interests, clientele, and challenges.

Goals

Goal of the Communication Plan Committee

- ◆ Develop and implement a Communication Plan for the Ohio Society of American Foresters.

In order to reach this goal, the planning committee has identified a set of standards:

- ◆ Maintain communication within Communication Plan Committee
- ◆ Maintain communication with membership, the Executive Committee, and other sub-committees
- ◆ Get the plan approved by exec committee or members (?) by Fall 2004
- ◆ Begin Implementation by Fall 2004 and continue to utilize it

Goals of OSAF's External Communications Efforts

- ◆ Position OSAF as the primary source of credible information regarding forestry in Ohio.
- ◆ Increase public access to professional forestry information through innovative technological media.
- ◆ Involve all members of OSAF in communications efforts

Goals of the OSAF Communications Plan

- ◆ Identify Target Audiences
- ◆ Create Messages and Strategies to Reach Target Audiences
- ◆ Develop an on-going communication network among members and non-members
 - be able to contact the "right people at the right time"
 - provide a means to identify what issues might apply to what audiences
- ◆ Provide a means to anticipate issues
- ◆ Provide a means for "emergency" communications in addition to the ability to address the "usual" issues

This plan must meet a set of criteria identified by the committee:

- ◆ It must communicate our messages/core values
- ◆ It must be geared toward Ohio
- ◆ It must be doable/realistic
- ◆ It must be responsible/well-thought/informed
 - Gather information from membership, National SAF, etc
- ◆ It must communicate with members *and* non-members
 - Well written, easy to follow
 - Reach all audiences
- ◆ It must be able to evolve with changing needs
 - Allow for regular review and re-prioritization
- ◆ It must be able to be used efficiently by future OSAF communication chairpersons and OSAF members

Target Audiences

OSAF Members

Potential OSAF members

General Public

Forest Landowners

Media

Policymakers

Educators

 k-12

 college

 “Non-classroom”

Special Interest Groups

 Environmental Interests

 Forest Industry Production

 Other Professional Associations

Other Natural Resource Professionals

Youth

 Primary

 Secondary

 Post Secondary

Messages

No matter the specific outreach initiative, our overarching messages, are integrally linked with OSAF's Core Values

- ◆ Forests are a fundamental source of global health and human welfare and improve the quality of life in Ohio for Ohio's citizens.
- ◆ Forests must be sustained through simultaneously meeting environmental, economic, and community aspirations and needs.
- ◆ Foresters are dedicated to professional forest management and conservation based on information derived from scientific research.
- ◆ Foresters are uniquely trained to serve society by providing sound knowledge and professional forest management skills.

Communications vehicles

A number of communication vehicles may be considered to carry the messages to various targeted audiences. A communications effort targeted to a specific audience or issue may use any of these singly or in combination.

Advertisements

Articles

Audio-visual presentations (e.g., slides, PowerPoint, CD-ROM, videotape)

Batch e-mail

Billboards

Broadcast fax

Curriculum materials

Daily newspapers

Direct mail

Documentaries

Editorial board briefings

Electronic discussion lists

Exhibits

Fact sheets

Feature stories

Legislative briefings

Letters to the editor

Media tours

News releases

Opinion-editorials

Position statements

SAF meetings

SAF publications

Speeches

Sponsorships (e.g., TV/radio shows, events, forestry related scholarships)

World Wide Web, particularly SAF national and state websites

Strategies

STRATEGY 1: Target OSAF Members – Internal Communications

Develop and have in place a system for communicating effectively, efficiently, and in a timely manner with all Ohio SAF members.

1. Develop a Communications Chair job description
2. Develop a timetable for Communication Chair responsibilities
3. Develop a job description and timetable for the Hetuch Editor
4. Develop a job description and timetable for the OSAF Webmaster
5. Develop a phone and e-mail network (phone tree) for Executive Committee and members
6. Develop (or utilize national) working groups
7. Identify responsibilities for communicating meetings including process, responsibilities, and timetables.
8. Develop communication process for all committees
9. Develop mailing process including individual responsible and who keeps the list updated
10. Develop-e-mail process including individual responsible and who keeps the list updated

STRATEGY 2: Develop outreach tools

Develop and have in place a series of materials and methods that will support an active external communications program.

1. Develop theme, logo, and graphics for materials that supports the messages above.
2. Create news releases, opinion-editorials, fact sheets, and other outreach material.
3. Create an information/media kit that includes:
 - a. Backgrounders on OSAF and the profession
 - b. Bios of OSAF officers and spokespeople
 - c. Charts, photos, or other graphic support
 - d. Press releases, FAQs, talking points, as needed.
4. Funnel OSAF members to national SAF for tools for use to support their efforts to conduct external outreach. Methods include:
 - a. Link on OSAF website
 - b. Regular reminders in Hetuch
 - c. Handouts and/or presentations at OSAF meetings
5. Develop tools for OSAF members to use to support their efforts to conduct external outreach. Tools include:
 - a. Ohio press releases, op-eds, talking points, and other outreach vehicles
 - b. Make available lists of local media
 - c. List of members in the OSAF Media Relations Program
 - d. List of Education and Communication Working Group (F3) members.

STRATEGY 3: Target OSAF members – External Communications

Seek opportunities to support local units and individual members to conduct external communications on behalf of OSAF and the forestry profession.

1. Develop a network of OSAF members (Media Relations Program volunteers) to disseminate information efficiently and reliably
2. Inform members (particularly Media Relations Program volunteers) about the resources available to members

- a. Lists of local media.
 - b. Link to national SAF site
 - c. Hetuch
 - d. Meetings
3. Develop External Communications Guidelines for members.
 4. Post on the OSAF website information about how to conduct public outreach (via SAF website)
 5. Deliver public relations training at meetings.
 6. Encourage members to participate in the SAF-Outreach electronic discussion list
 7. Distribute local, state, and national press releases, op-eds, talking points, sample letters, and other outreach vehicles to communications committee members, OSAF newsletter editor, MRP volunteers, and SAF-Outreach discussion list.
 - a. Develop and distribute OSAF business cards and brochures for member use.

STRATEGY 4: Target media

Position SAF with local media as the primary source of forestry information in Ohio.

1. Support and authorize individual OSAF members, particularly Media Relations Program volunteers, and the communications committee to conduct media relations at the local and regional level. (See Strategy 2 above.)
2. Target local media to be reached, using members where appropriate.
3. Generate flow of information to the Ohio media via press releases, op/ed pieces, etc.
4. Identify prestigious media for special attention and offer story ideas and develop relationships with those media.
5. Use OSAF activities such as the national convention, state society meetings, and position statements for high visibility and as a platform for delivering messages.
6. Post information (press releases, background info, etc.) for media on OSAF website.
7. Identify key media contacts within Ohio
8. Develop a media relations process for Media Relations Program Volunteers
9. Coordinate media outreach with other agencies such as government, industry, and forestry associations/societies.

STRATEGY 5: Target policymakers

Position SAF with local, state, and national policymakers as the primary source of forestry information.

1. Conduct outreach to national legislators and policymakers
2. Conduct media outreach in support of legislative activities of OSAF to reflect both forestry activities and messages.
3. Monitor and anticipate legislative events when conducting media outreach.
4. Encourage OSAF members to develop relationships with local policymakers and their staff.
5. Encourage OSAF members to support the OSAF policy committee
6. Conduct legislative information events targeted at state and local legislators and their staff.
 - a. Develop Statehouse Visit protocol/process, timetable, and member responsibilities
 - b. Identify new and effective ways of making our visits memorable
7. Coordinate policymaker outreach with other agencies such as government, industry, and forestry associations/societies.

STRATEGY 6: Target Forest landowners

Position OSAF and its members with landowners as the primary source of forestry information.

1. Encourage OSAF members to conduct and/or participate in outreach events (workshops, field tours, seminars, the Tree Farm program, etc.) to landowners.
2. Encourage outreach to and collaboration with national, regional, and local landowners organizations. Target those organizations' publications to deliver the forestry messages.
3. Promote the value of utilizing a professional forester to landowners.
4. Use mass media, primarily local and regional media, to inform landowners of the role that foresters play in enhancing the value of their resource.
5. Work with national and local legislators to encourage incentives for sustainable forest management on private forestlands.
6. Work with local public officials responsible for zoning and land-use planning to ensure that professional forest resource information is considered when making local decisions that could affect forest resources.
7. Coordinate forest landowner outreach with other agencies such as government, industry, and forestry associations/societies.

STRATEGY 7: Target potential members and other natural resource professionals

Position OSAF with potential members and other natural resources professionals as the primary organization serving the forestry profession.

1. Reach out to potential members via targeted recruitment and publicity efforts.
2. Reach out to and collaborate with other national natural resource professional organizations.
3. Reach out to and collaborate with local units of other natural resource professional organizations.
4. Promote OSAF meetings and other relevant activities at all levels to potential members and other natural resources managers.
5. Distribute outreach vehicles (press releases, op/eds, etc.,) to other professional organizations.
6. Provide incentives for employers to encourage employees to be OSAF members.

STRATEGY 8: Target youth – Post Secondary

Position OSAF with college students as the primary organization serving the forestry profession.

1. Encourage OSAF members to share the SAF messages with college/university forestry students and personally invite individuals to activities.
2. Continue to provide and highlight the forestry scholarship program at Hocking Technological College and The Ohio State University.
3. Continue to support student attendance at professional, state, and national meetings by subsidizing registration and travel.
4. Identify and address student needs when planning events such as driving distance, cost, agenda, and timing.
5. Encourage OSAF membership support for student chapter activities and provide speakers for programs
6. Provide financial, professional, and mentoring support to college/university forestry students.
7. Encourage OSAF membership after graduation by supplementing first year membership dues and sending personal letters of invitation to every Ohio graduate for upcoming events.

STRATEGY 9: Recreational Forest Users

Position OSAF with Recreational Forest Users as the primary source of forestry information.

1. Utilize communications vehicles to emphasize the difference between managed forests and parks / preserves.
2. Highlight achievements of forestland management via communications vehicles.
3. Continue to support the Division of Forestry and US Forest Service multi-use management efforts.

STRATEGY 10: Target environmental interest groups

Position OSAF as a key organization representing environmental interests related to sustainable forest management

1. Work with public and private land managers to provide information to environmental interest groups regarding the scientific basis for silvicultural practices and sustainable land management decisions.
2. Provide outreach to local environmental groups such as the Sierra Club and Buckeye Forest Council by sponsoring “eco-weekends” or “eco-workshops” that target leaders and interested members of environmental groups along with land managers and scientists to visit field sites and discuss the ecological and sustainability factors that affect management decisions on public lands.
3. When appropriate, invite representatives of environmental interest groups to OSAF sponsored meetings, activities, and forums.
4. Jointly sponsor an annual event that highlights differing outlooks on land management issues, *e.g.*, how to manage invasive plant and pest species.

STRATEGY 11: Target forest industry & production

Position OSAF with Ohio’s forest industry as the primary organization serving the forestry profession and source of forestry information.

1. Encourage continued / greater OSAF involvement of industry employed foresters
2. Provide incentives for forest industry to allow employee OSAF member participation in OSAF events.
3. Communicate the value and importance of science-based forest management to the logging community and production facilities via communication vehicles.
4. Communicate the shared roles of landowner/forester/logger/production companies as equally necessary for the long-term productivity of Ohio's forests via communication vehicles. Highlight the fact that foresters recognize the loggers and production companies’ roles in the process, while encouraging them to further embrace the forester's role.

STRATEGY 12: Target teachers and youth group leaders

Position OSAF with local educators and youth groups as the primary source of forestry information.

1. Encourage OSAF members to conduct or participate in events (workshops, camps, field tours, classroom visits, etc.) targeted at teachers and youth groups.
2. Provide Walk in the Forest for Teachers Handbook
3. Encourage local units to partner with Project Learning Tree and other conservation education organizations to develop workshops for teachers.

STRATEGY 13: Target youth – Primary & Secondary

Educate young people about forestry, the profession, and position OSAF with youth as the primary source of forestry information.

1. Encourage OSAF members to utilize SAF communication tools for young children through media, school programs, and community programs in their local school systems.
2. Identify “potential future foresters” in high schools and encourage them to pursue a higher education in the field of forestry.
3. Continue and build OSAF support and participation in “Forestry Camp” by supplying instructors, providing material assistance, and by inserting information about SAF into the curriculum.
4. Utilize SAF forestry career videos and brochures available to local high schools and guidance councilors.
5. Encourage OSAF membership to volunteer as professionals in local career days, Envirothon competitions, and FFA education/projects.

STRATEGY 14: Target general public

In addition to the subsets of the general public addressed above, OSAF will serve the general public as a clearinghouse of information about forestry.

1. Use the OSAF website to distribute information about OSAF and forestry.
2. Develop Public Service Announcements for Ohio radio, television, and billboards.
3. Develop relationships with non-forestry related organizations that provide a medium to advertise the organization’s website and message i.e. Ohio tourism groups, Ohio magazines, tourist locations where OSAF members have assisted with forest management.
4. Respond to public information requests with the help of OSAF members.
5. Provide electronic discussion lists for members of the public who want to interact with OSAF members

Evaluation

Our plan will be assessed annually. OSAF members will also be surveyed on a regular basis to gauge their perception of OSAF communications efforts. The plan will be effective if:

- OSAF members are increasingly engaged public outreach regarding OSAF and the forestry profession.
- National, state, and local policymakers and staff increasingly seek information and recommendations from the OSAF; and OSAF and its members have increasingly developed relationships with key policymakers.
- National, state, and local media seek information from OSAF and its members; and OSAF and its members have increasingly developed relationships with key local media players.
- OSAF is increasingly reaching out to other professional natural resource organizations and collaborating with them on projects that can benefit everyone involved.
- The OSAF membership regularly communicates with the public and the messages are consistent.
- Retain and expand OSAF membership by understanding that a good communication network will help professionals recognize the value of OSAF

Measurable Indicators

Amount of member participation in OSAF events

Number of direct “hits” to OSAF website

Number of “hits” to OSAF website from outside links

Number of requests by OSAF members for outreach materials

Amount of outreach materials utilized annually

Number of phone or e-mail contacts from target audiences to OSAF members requesting forestry information

Amount of OSAF visibility in Ohio media

Amount of OSAF visibility in Ohio non-forestry related written materials & websites

Amount of OSAF visibility in Ohio forestry-related written materials & websites

Membership growth

OSAF Communications Committee

Stephanie Miller, Chair

Scott Costello, Hetuch Editor

Joe Puperi, Webmaster

Dr. Robert Long, Science/Technology Chair

Stephen Rist, Hocking Student Chapter

Robert Placier, Historian/Archivist