



# ORGANIZE TO WIN - A GRASSROOTS ACTIVIST'S HANDBOOK A GUIDE TO HELP PEOPLE ORGANIZE COMMUNITY CAMPAIGNS

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## **CHAPTER 1: ASSUMPTIONS AND MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT GRASSROOTS CAMPAIGNS**

*(You can be universally popular in your community or you can run successful campaigns to eliminate threats to it, but you can't do both.)*

1. Any campaign can succeed if it has enough community support. But most people who are not active in environmental work or political activity have no idea how the political process works, let alone that they can speak directly to their elected representatives or attend meetings and speak up on issues.
2. Community support, essential for any campaign, is effective only to the extent that the concern of the community is specifically introduced into and expressed in the political process.
3. Elected representatives can control, modify, and cancel the proposals, activities, and actions of a government agency. Your elected representative may lack the power to begin things, but usually has the power to stop them.
4. "Time windows" for campaigns are longer than you think. ANY project can be stopped until the trees are on the ground, the holes are dug, or the physical structures actually built.
5. Agencies will align their reports and recommendations to reflect the views of the elected officials who have authority over their staff and budget.
6. When you cannot develop enough community support to get your own elected officials on your side, you can often get elected representatives from other jurisdictions to support you.
7. Any citizen can create and successfully implement a grassroots campaign – if he or she has the will.
8. Campaigns succeed or fail based on how much "action" occurs. Action consists of phone calls to decision makers, written material they actually read or physically handle and personal contacts with and comments expressed by people at meetings. Everything else: alerts, videos, TV coverage, advertising, posters, email, etc. are mere precursors and facilitators to action, not, in themselves, action.
9. Regardless of what action a person promises to take on an issue, most are too timid to actually contact their public officials unless you properly prepare them to do it. Ninety percent of those who agree to take action, don't until your second or third follow-up.
10. Good TV and press coverage alone won't win campaigns. Coverage for your issue should be sought, but information on TV generally does not create action. Often when people see an issue on television, they assume others are taking care of it.
11. No campaign can be won by sending out two thousand or two million alerts, emails and calls for action. The test of any lobbying campaign is how many letters and phone calls are actually received by decision makers, not by how many alerts, appeals and other exhortations to take action are spammed out.
12. Elected representatives never do more than represent their constituents. That's why they are called "representatives." They aren't teachers or change agents. Elected representatives will bend

themselves into pretzels to keep their ear to the ground. What representatives do is a function of who they talk to and what information and lobbying they have been exposed to directly.

13. You can't lobby another person without being lobbied yourself. Anytime you lobby another, you are lobbied back or counter-lobbied. If the person on the other side of the table is better at it than you are, you may find the person whose mind you seek to change, has changed your mind.

14. Projects that stink environmentally, invariably also stink politically, financially, and ethically. Lift the lid from most bad projects and you invariably find public funds used to enrich bad actors with political connections.

15. Environmentally bad schemes usually create windfall profits for someone. When you try to stop bad projects, some people will get angry with you. And the more they benefit, the madder they will get. Machiavelli said that people may eventually get over your killing of their relatives, but not the taking of their money.

16. If you turn the other cheek when you encounter personal intimidation in public meetings, you just encourage more of it. Bring people to meetings who are emotionally and psychologically capable of dealing with intimidation. If you don't have any people like that in your organization, find some.

## **CHAPTER 2: ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF GRASSROOTS CAMPAIGNS**

*(All successful environmental campaigns resemble one another. All unsuccessful ones fail in their own unique way.)*

### **DECIDE ON THE GOAL OF YOUR CAMPAIGN.**

Identify the goal of your campaign. Put it in writing. Know and state the specific relief you seek. For example: agency X must withdraw proposal Y. A deadline should be extended to another date. Don't cut those fifty trees. A zoning change must be denied, etc. Every person who deals with people who are officially "complaining"; from customer service representatives to personnel officers, will tell you that people who present grievances and complaints almost never state the exact relief they seek. But agencies, legislators, and the entire political process are organized to deal with people who seek specific solutions to specific problems. Being very specific about your goal helps everybody understand what you want—from the agency staff to your own volunteers.

Decide at the beginning of the campaign exactly what outcome you seek. It is often not enough to just be against something. You may also need to present an alternative, for example: we do not want an industrial park there; we want a nature preserve. We do not want a timber sale on that mountain; we want it set aside as open space. If you have an alternative that requires legislative action, have someone qualified prepare that alternative as a specific proposal or a piece of legislation.

Most activists in a campaign can usually agree on identifying the nature of a problem, but when real progress occurs and the other side is ready to settle, some campaigns unfortunately discover that their activists have real differences about what specific relief is acceptable. This is particularly important whenever an opposed project is an "attractive nuisance" or has a socially positive component like filling a wetland to build a battered women's shelter or cutting forests to

provide some jobs for minorities. The final stages of such campaigns can split a campaign wide apart as some activists support compromise measures while others hold out for complete abandonment. Bad actors increasingly tend to include or involve socially attractive elements in their schemes so they can accuse opponents of sexism, ageism, colonialism, classism, racism, etc. Promoters of bad schemes have learned from watching debates within the progressive community that a certain percentage of environmental activists will withdraw at the first accusation of being guilty of any "ism." Just as a burglar might throw a juicy bone over the fence to distract the junkyard dogs, it is a rare developer these days who does not embed a recycling or daycare center, a community garden, or earmark benefits for minorities in their schemes.

This is why in the end game of some campaigns, the intra-organizational conflicts among the good guys are more virulent than the inter-organizational conflicts between the opposing sides.

#### HOW TO ASSESS COMMUNITY ATTITUDES.

Often during campaigns, if you believe what you read in the newspaper or what you hear at public meetings, you would think that all the local citizens hate environmentalists. This is hardly ever the case. Progressives are out there. They just tend to keep quiet. There is a quick, free, and easy way to know exactly where any community stands on environmental issues and it is more accurate than polls.

For voting tabulation purposes, counties are subdivided into small geographic areas called precincts. Our county of 20,000 people has thirty precincts. Historical voting data is always available down to the precinct level. Voting behavior for any precinct tends to be stable and predictable over time. To determine exactly how many people in any area hold pro and anti-environmental attitudes, analyze precinct voting data from past elections. This data is generally available from the voting registrar in your county and is increasingly being posted to the Internet. Some candidates and ballot measures present voters with stark black and white, pro and anti-environmental choices. These are called "cutting" or "wedge" issues. In Oregon, we have these issues in almost every election. A recent issue would have banned all clearcutting on private lands in Oregon. If you analyze the precinct voting results on these "cutting" ballot measures, you can tell exactly how many people at the neighborhood level support environmental protection, and exactly where environmental support is weak or strong. If you track "cutting" issues from election to election, you can see how sentiment may have changed over time. Examining gay or abortion ballot measures, or the success of candidates who made these issues the basis of their platform, will tell you about the overall progressive/reactionary makeup of your community. Progressive sentiment in rural areas is generally stronger than you might think. It is common in communities identified as very conservative to find a lot of progressives. Most counties thought to be conservative have at least 25%, and many have 35% or more, of their population who vote progressively. Precinct voting history provides a sort of x-ray into the views of citizens right down to the neighborhood level.

Within counties that vote conservatively, there will nevertheless be precincts where voters are conservative on social or fiscal issues, but may hold pro-environmental views. Some precincts consist of voters who, while very conservative, have open minds. These are called "persuadable" precincts. Their votes will vary considerably depending on the specific measures before them. Other precincts consist of people with closed minds or "unpersuadable" voters. They will vote for conservative candidates and issues no matter how horrible they are. Precinct data will show

issues and candidates with high percentages of "undervotes," where voters didn't vote on a particular item on their ballot. High undervotes for an unopposed incumbent may indicate the voters don't like the candidate. For example, if an elected official who runs unopposed is a rabid anti-environmentalist, a high undervote can signal that the voters don't like him.

Precinct voting data will also tell you what percentage of registered voters actually turn out to vote. This in conjunction with the data above would show you precincts where, if you could get people to turnout, people would probably vote progressively.

In my county, the prevailing wisdom was that one community was overwhelmingly conservative and Republican. But careful examination of precinct voting records showed that this town, while regularly voting for Republicans, often voted 40% or more for pro-environmental measures appearing on any ballot. County precinct data showed that five of our thirty precincts always voted very progressively in every election, actually more like university precincts in a college town.

Where local officials are the decision makers for your issue, studying voting data may encourage you to put your issue to a vote in a city or countywide special election. To do this you need a certain percentage of registered voters to sign a petition. You can use the results of telephone polls and door-to-door canvasses to conduct "get out the vote" campaigns to make sure that people who share your views actually go to the polls. Progressives generally have low turnout, but if you can get them motivated enough to turnout for an election, you can often pass very progressive ballot measures, even in quite conservative areas. While the presidential elections held every four years in November on average have fifty% turnouts, most votes for local measures are held in specially scheduled elections where voter turnout is often only twenty to thirty %, or even less, so the number of people you need to pass a measure is small. Historical county precinct returns will give you voter turnout history for all kinds of past special elections.

I was involved in some recent rural elections where the pro and anti-environmental choices were clear and the pro-environmental side used canvassing and get out the vote (GOTV). The turnout was increased to eighty% and more and the pro-environmental measures and candidates won by extraordinary margins of two or three to one. The whole subject of progressive voter turnout and voter performance in rural areas is discussed in detail in my essay, *THE BIG SWATH OF RED* (see Appendix #18). Any book on political campaign management will explain how to do precinct analysis and most state Democratic parties conduct formal training on how to use these techniques in their training programs for campaign managers during election season. It is also likely that the state Democratic Party, the League of Conservation Voters (LCV) or a candidate for the state or national legislature will already have done a sophisticated precinct analysis on the environmental sentiment for your area and it is sitting in a binder someplace.

**CHOOSE ONE PERSON TO BE YOUR SPOKESPERSON.**

Deciding on the exact relief you seek also helps solve the "Who will be our spokesperson?" problem.

A campaign without a spokesperson is just a well-intentioned mob. Select one person to represent your campaign. Don't have two or three different people tripping over each other and contradicting themselves with different stories, positions and opinions.

In any campaign, the politics and facts of the situation change constantly. What may be a sound strategy on Monday may require revision on Friday. Serious problems arise when one person decides to change a strategy without informing others. This can lead to bad feelings and public confusion. And when the public gets confused about your issue, your campaign and credibility become muddled. Changes in strategy must be cleared with the group.

The same dynamics that make it difficult to choose a single spokesperson at the beginning of a campaign may make it impossible to do so later. It may be hard to choose a spokesperson when your campaign is just a half dozen folks sitting around doing planning. But that's nothing compared to choosing one when the pressure of the media, demands for witnesses at hearings, offers to compromise, actions of groups organized to oppose you, or other fast breaking events demand clear and concise reactions from your campaign. If you ignore the vital step of choosing one spokesperson, your group may find itself, as others have, at a public hearing where two allies take totally different public positions on your issue.

#### DO YOUR HOMEWORK.

Before you begin lobbying against the substance of any project, master the details of the administrative processes it must proceed through. Collect paper copies of all relevant laws, regulations, and planning documents. Mastering the process will allow you to monitor the administrative processes from beginning to end. If possible, perform your legal "scoping" before you have openly declared your opposition. Agency staff may be very forthcoming about the details and mechanics of their administrative processes until they know you are opposing their project. So confine your early conversations to the dry bureaucratic processes which bureaucrats seem to enjoy discussing. After you have openly declared your position, information often becomes difficult to extract from agency staff as you may be viewed as an enemy of the agency. Of course legal and political "scoping" never really ends until a bad project has been defeated, so be on the lookout for every possible angle to help your campaign until it is finished.

Do not fail to take appropriate action, file documents, testify, lodge objections, etc. at every point. Discover all the approvals, permits, and processes an agency, commission or developer has to go through. For example, county or state rules may be too weak or unenforceable to stop a project that disturbs wetlands. However, the project may involve federal loans and the funding agencies' rules regarding wetlands may have more teeth and its own separate appeal and input processes. This is where attorneys and friends in state and federal agencies can be tapped.

All private or public projects, whether to cut down federal forests or build industrial parks, must take place on an actual, physical piece of land. All land, and anything to do with it including any projects built upon it, is governed by some regulatory process(es) open to the public. The exact processes will depend on who owns the land, where it is located, and where the financing comes from. But all actions involving land, whether under city, county, state, or federal jurisdiction, will have formal processes that create public records that provide one or more entry points for activist intervention.

The vast majority of bad projects proceed successfully only because no one shows up to object at key points in the permit process where projects are the most vulnerable. For example, often developments involve the successful obtaining of a waiver or exception to a law, regulation, or

state or county growth plan. Often a single citizen simply filing or voicing an objection can stop or delay a project for months or years.

I know of one recent situation where a very small and completely benign construction project was proposed that would have greatly benefited both endangered fish and public health, but it threatened a developer's financial interests. So the developer created a phony (one person) environmental group, made up a letterhead and sent dozens of letters to every state and federal regulatory agency with any possible jurisdiction objecting to purported wetlands and other environmental problems. Her objections were largely specious but since federal funds were involved, she was able to force the project to undergo additional expensive surveys and reviews. So all by herself, without an attorney, she successfully delayed the project for many years by forcing the project to prove that it was not harmful. The alleged concerns were bogus and the agencies knew it, but they had no choice but to put the project on hold because the proper papers were filed with the proper agency at the proper time. In this case distant federal funding authorities stopped a local community project and even today, five years later, parts of that project are not yet complete.

This case was not special or unusual. Agencies receive thousands of permit applications to fill wetlands and install riprap projects, which are usually automatically approved unless someone files an objection or asks for a public hearing. But few permit applications ever receive any public comment although even the slightest objection from anyone may cancel or delay a project indefinitely. It is always far easier to stop an agency from granting a permit or awarding a contract than to get them to withdraw or cancel it after it is approved, although this can and has been done.

In general the more public funds are involved, the easier it is to stop a project. Public funds are increasingly being used to finance private development schemes and hybrids like private/public partnerships on public and quasi-public land are becoming the norm. Usually the more environmentally flaky a project is, the more economically risky it is, and so unfortunately the more public funds are involved. This is because investors hate to put their own money in risky projects. The rules and laws have been made very simple for developers to operate successfully. The underlying premise of most public processes is: "If no one formally objects, then there must not be any problems." Or: "If there had been any problems, certainly we would have heard." If you do your homework, learn the rules and laws, and show up for meetings, foiling bad schemes can be a whole lot easier than you might think.

FIND AN ANGLE THAT MOTIVATES PEOPLE TO TAKE ACTION.

Every campaign is unique. No two campaigns are exactly the same. What worked in a past campaign may not work in the next. Decide what makes your campaign special and find a creative angle or insight that encapsulates it. Reduce that insight to a metaphor, a slogan, a graphic or a memorable phrase with a creative slant that people will be able to remember.

For example, if your mayor refuses to consider evidence from biologists who prove an industrial park will destroy a wetland and increase air pollution near a school, you could take a variety of different approaches. You could make a graphic of a group of small children playing in a schoolyard wearing gas masks. You might create a cartoon caricaturizing the mayor as the monkey that heard, saw, and spoke no evil. If a large corporation was behind the industrial park,

you could do a "Don't let XYZ Corporation decide our future." campaign. If the wetland contained a rare endangered lily, you could get garden clubs involved to launch a "Don't Destroy The Last Lily." campaign.

The ways you can slant into an issue, or "position" a bad project is limited only by your imagination and creativity. Create your campaign to craft an angle to motivate, engage, and enrage the target audience. Amuse, amaze and confound. Humor, caricature, and exaggeration all have their place in any effective campaign.

But remember, a campaign theme that might work in a rural area with 15% unemployment and lots of open space, may not work in a large city. A "Don't let government ram this down our throats" campaign might work in a rural conservative community, while before and after pictures showing how a beautiful place will be reduced to asphalt might work best in an urban area.

Do your homework. Understand your target audience and the ecological, political, and demographic realities of your community and what will and won't resonate with them. Don't be afraid to change or abandon your message or tactics if the ones you initially choose don't work.

#### KNOW WHO OWNS THE LAND.

If you want to oppose overdevelopment and sprawl, your chances of success will improved if you determine first exactly who and what you are up against. This requires some special kinds of research and data gathering, including determining who owns the land where the proposed development will occur. Fortunately, it is very easy to find out who owns the land, when they bought it, and the purchase price. Start with public records at the court house.

Lending institutions and title companies must be able to easily determine the ownership history of any piece of property to ensure clean titles and not make bad loans. They are paranoid about lending on land already encumbered or making loans to overextended people. So land records are easy to understand and open to their (and your) scrutiny. Therefore all records about land including title history, taxes, assessed value, easements, liens, options and encumbrances are amazingly easy to uncover. These records are as open to the public for any reason (including mere curiosity) as the names of the books in your public library.

Checking public records of land ownership can also alert you to conflicts of interest within your own organization. Once I was shocked to find the underlying mortgages on land involved in a project we were opposing were held by a core member of our own group. If you want to do a lot of private land activism, you can get the county's tax records from your county assessor to put on your own home computer. Always know what and who you are dealing with before you begin any campaign, but particularly campaigns that involve private land and development.

Assume that whenever you are dealing with any arm of local government, or any planning or economic development agency, that you are involved with a real estate speculator support group.

Virtually all subdivision proposals, expansions of existing city services to new areas, rezoning, urban growth boundary expansions, public transit extensions, public infrastructure upgrades, and so-called "community development" have one real purpose: to secure public money through grants, taxes or water/sewer user fees to finance multi-million dollar extensions of water and

sewer lines to previously undeveloped areas. This always has the effect of dramatically ballooning the value of all the land in the immediate area of the development. Raw land without infrastructure is essentially useless and can be purchased very cheap. But after basic services go in, the land can be worth many times more. For example, an industrial park sited on prior farmland could easily increase the value of the adjacent land by a hundred times. One recent city boundary adjustment increased the land value from a few hundred dollars an acre to several hundred thousand dollars an acre. One owner alone had over a thousand acres upzoned.

When infrastructure is extended from point A to point B, every point along the line now has access to services. Moreover, land that lies beyond B may now be able to connect. One of the main (only?) purposes of so called empowerment zones, and enterprise zones, and regional economic development is to provide a socially acceptable mechanism to run water and sewer line infrastructure and pay for the connections and extensions necessary to any development.

The concept behind economic development and community infrastructure improvement is a theology that all new projects and all growth is done only to provide jobs. Therefore all development is serving the needs of the working class and poor families. Therefore, the highest and best purpose of government funds is to subsidize the extension of infrastructure. These days developers can usually get, not only free water and sewer lines, they can also receive grants to prepare the proposals to fund them. They can even use empowerment and enterprise zones to get tax and lottery monies to obtain free buildings and machinery. Developers can also use community development schemes to escape property taxes, water and sewer charges, permit fees, and may even get some of their payroll costs subsidized too.

When you oppose development schemes you are essentially opposing windfall profits for every landowner in the area. So it is simple prudence to determine who benefits from a development scheme. In one case, activists were opposing a subdivision and by checking land records found out the owner of an adjacent parcel also was the owner of the newspaper. If the project had been approved, his land would have ballooned in value. Because activists knew this, when he gave testimony about the merits of the proposal, activists could point out his self-interest and thus his influence was much reduced even though as a pillar of the community, his views would ordinarily have been very influential. The project was turned down.

A primary purpose of so-called city and regional planning is to ensure that sewer and water plants have the capacity to service future expansion to undeveloped areas. Typically speculators plan projects in undeveloped areas without water and sewer. County planners then incorporate these proposed projects into master plans assuming that since they will be built someday, it would only be prudent to plan for them. When federal and state granting agencies review sewer and water improvement requests, they insist the projects be sized to accommodate the expected growth laid out in master plans. Thus planning, rather than merely providing prudent accommodation to future growth, actually creates it through self fulfilling prophecies. To stop sprawl you must stop both speculators from laying out future projects on paper, and planners from incorporating these projects in their plans. Once these paper exercises are in place they become self-realizing and self implementing. To the naive, master plans may appear to control and manage sprawl, but are seldom more than handy tools for real estate speculators.

## BUILD YOUR CAMPAIGN ON A SOUND FOUNDATION.

A. Create a file. Every campaign begins with someone opening a file. This is a repository for your original correspondence, names and addresses of supporters, political contacts and resources, copies of newspaper stories, position papers, and chronological notes summarizing reports of conversations.

B. Inventory your human resources. Create a list of your supporters. Include the name and phone number of every person who agrees to do anything. Identify those who can act as telephone and letter-tree captains, those who have already attended organizing meetings or might be willing to attend future public meetings or those who can help you organize. Your goal is to get a handle on the people available and how they can contribute to your campaign. You want to be able to tap, at a moment's notice, those who can write letters, go to meetings, make phone calls, and contribute money. Depending on the size of your effort, you may want to put this information on a computer, but your goal is completeness. A thorough list on a piece of paper is probably more useful than an elaborate, but incomplete list on a computer.

As your campaign progresses these lists can become lengthy. Annotate your contact's name with any unique or identifying information about that person and what their particular assets might be. Later when you use your lists, you will find that these short remarks have added considerable value. The first volume of Robert Caro's biography of Lyndon Johnson, describes how Johnson prepared for his first run for Congress and shows how a master politician organized and used contact lists.

C. Raise some initial seed money. Out-of-pocket expenses must be covered. If you have a good cause and need money, people will always give it to you, but only if you ask. Asking for money to protect and defend a community is NOT like asking for money for yourself. Find someone who understands this (most people don't) and make that person your fundraising captain. Simply ask every one of your early supporters to put in some money for photocopying, phone calls, etc. Give receipts. Keep track of who gave what. Later you can hold bake sales, raffles, make direct appeals, and write grants.

D. Create an organization. Give it a name and put the name on a letterhead. Call it Friends of the XYZ Forest (or whatever your cause may be), Save the Whales (or whatever you wish to save), etc. Letters on an organization's letterhead to local elected officials or agencies are taken far more seriously than one from a citizen. A name shows there is a real organization behind the campaign.

E. Create a list of primary contacts. The voter files for the election precincts in your town may be a good place to create a list. You can get voter files from your county courthouse. Don't overlook the local phone book. If you are in a small town and have a lot of volunteers, take the local phone book and give each volunteer one page to phone each name to solicit help and donations. For a statewide campaign, pull together a list of groups that might help: regional and statewide environmental groups, hunting and fishing organizations, garden clubs, and even churches and religious organizations. Effective activists are always on the lookout for directories of organizations, mailing lists, and data bases. Local chamber of commerce offices often compile and publish guides and lists of local organizations and businesses.

F. Ladies First! Get women, particularly mothers, involved to the maximum possible extent. Lois Gibbs, the outstanding organizer against toxic waste (of Love Canal fame), conducts campaigns that sometimes place her members at risk of physical retaliation. She created her nationwide organization on the principle that mothers are tenacious and fearless environmental activists. She calls them "Mama Bears" because nothing is as aggressive as a mother bear trying to protect her cubs. Motivated women make the best organizers and activists.

G. Canvass. If you need to build communitywide support, gather your forces and do a door-to-door canvass. Labor unions and Democratic Party activists can give you pointers on canvassing. Any political campaign worker can show you how to sort the voter files, available from your county clerk, to give you a "walk list" with names sorted by street and address. Then you can go from door-to-door, in house number order, with a list that shows who lives there.

Knock on every door to educate the occupants and find new volunteers. Get a map of the city, divide it into small parts, and send a team to each area. Most volunteers can comfortably canvas for three or four hours a day. Hand out your materials, ask for support, and record the names of those who are interested in helping in any way. Some campaigns are very successful in obtaining written letters at the door. Don't forget to carefully cross off the streets as you complete them or you will lose track. Use the good leads you get to create a data base to invite these people to public meetings and recruit them to become active volunteers.

Do not let people canvass alone. For security and moral support it is best to work in pairs. Stay on the doorstep. DO NOT go inside a house. You will waste too much time, get bogged down, and expose yourself to potential security problems. Wait until after 1:00 p.m. on Sunday as people will be in church (or wonder why you are not). Never use hippies or folks with dreadlocks for canvassers as they may turn conservative people off. Avoid leaving material in mailboxes as that is against the postal laws.

Generally most people will welcome an environmental canvasser at the door, but not all. Some contacts (5% or so in small towns; more in larger ones) may be rude and obnoxious. Folks who canvass may need post canvass debriefing and morale support for the occasional door that is slammed in their face. But in general you can assume that most people who try canvassing will enjoy it. It is rewarding in a way almost nothing else is.

There are far more people than you may think who are simply waiting for somebody—anybody—to ask them to become involved or show them how they can do something useful. Canvassing provides connections for such people to become involved.

No matter how long you have lived in a place or how well you think you understand it, the only way to fully understand a community and what the people there really think is to perform a door-to-door canvass of every single house.

H. Tabling. Organize a basic table to display pictures, flyers, petitions, and written materials. Tables at supermarkets, fairs, and public events are always effective in getting your message out. Sometimes the national or regional environmental groups have major conferences where you can display and hand out your literature. Use these opportunities to educate, collect signatures on

petitions, solicit donations, and find new volunteers. Working a table will strengthen and deepen the commitment of your volunteers and alert you to their hidden talents.

#### USING THE FOUR PART POSTCARD

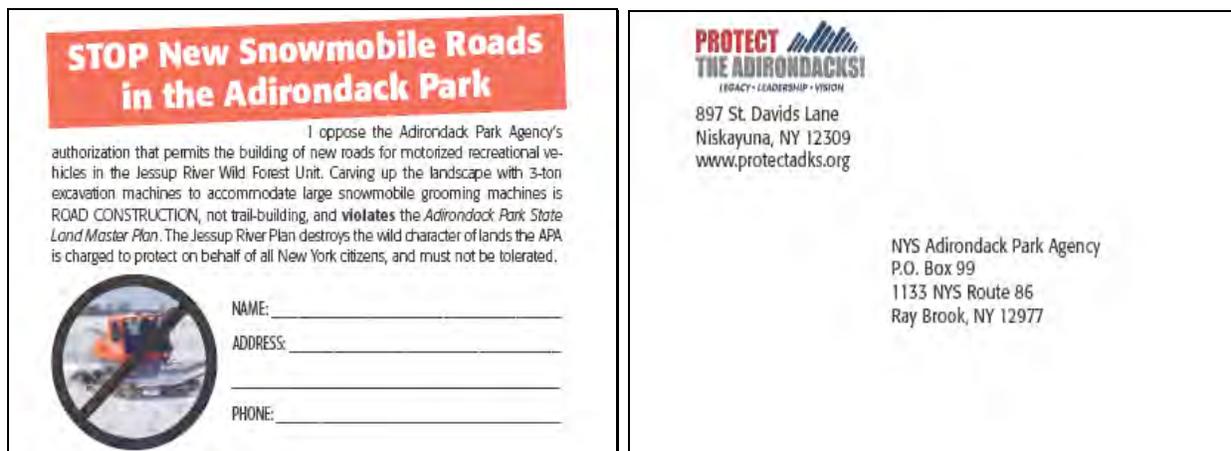
If you need a lot of public comments fast, create a postcard with a brief message and a simple graphic and print four of them horizontally on letter-sized cardstock. Address one to your primary target and the other three to the responsible congressman, senator, governor etc. This way you get four quick “letters” from each person. These work well with groups as you can hand them out to the audience and have them fill them out as they sit.

Before you print, check with the post office on specifications as you have to leave a margin at the bottom on one side and they have minimum and maximum size and paper thickness requirements for “home made” postcards.

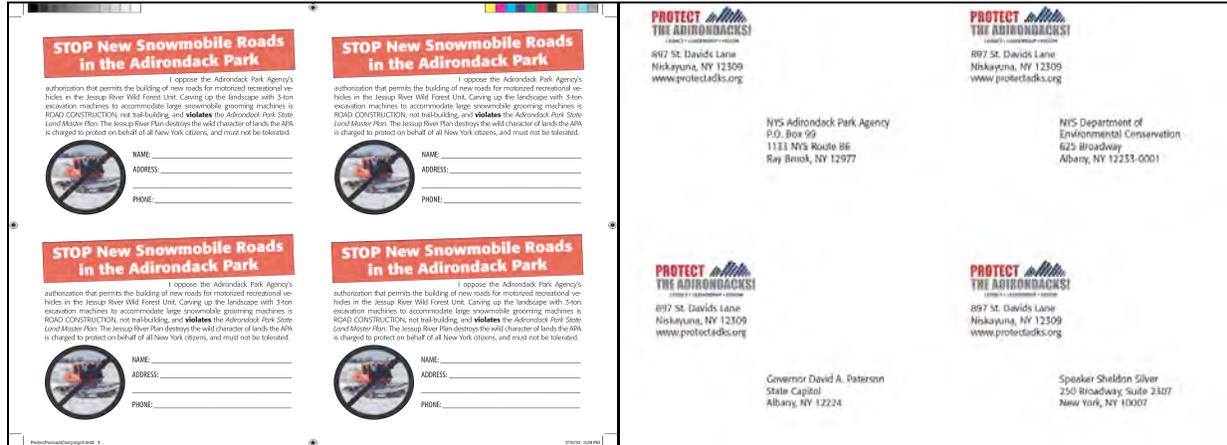
In one campaign Lou Gold, the famous itinerant ancient forest advocate, collected 7500 postcards in a series of public meetings and then got further “earned media” when he delivered each set in a big box to the Congressman, Forest Service, etc. He often collected enough money passing the hat for postage to pay the expenses of traveling around making his extraordinary wilderness advocacy slide shows.

All grassroots organizing begins with persuading one person to do something – even a very small thing like signing four postcards and donating \$2.00 for postage. Postcards turn a meeting from information to action. To someone who has never ever actually done anything to protect the environment, this is a first step. Bringing out the postcards and pens during a meeting brightens up a room and creates electricity – the experience of many people, together, waking up.

Below is an example of a postcard used in a recent campaign.



as printed “4 up” on 8.5” x 11” card stock



### CREATE A WELL-DESIGNED ONE PAGE ALERT.

Every campaign needs a basic call to action that clearly and dramatically summarizes your issue. You cannot have a serious campaign without one. Your alert must be compelling, well-written, accurate, and persuasive. It must contain a wealth of information condensed into one page.

Your alert should give a brief background explaining what you want people to do so anyone with no prior knowledge of the issue has enough information to:

- grasp the issue.
- know why it is important that they act.
- understand what specific action you want them to take: phone, write, fax, email, attend a meeting etc.

Your alert should include names, addresses and phone numbers so people know where to write and who to call.

The best brains in your campaign must be involved in crafting your alert because presentation is important. Once created, it can be revised slightly to serve a variety of needs: a press release, a meeting handout, or a poster to announce public meetings. If possible, get someone with graphic artist capabilities to choose the fonts and do the layout. It should be in black and white so it can be photocopied.

A good alert takes data and converts it into information, then takes that information and presents it as interesting information. Alerts highlight, from all the things there are in the world, the one thing you want people to pay attention to and then it shows them how to think about that one thing. The principles governing the creation of an alert are like those of flower arranging: the final product is elegant, it stands alone, complete, and needs nothing else to be understood. The alert below was used in a campaign in the Adirondacks against the expansion of snowmobile roads within the park.



**YOUR ADIRONDACK FOREST PRESERVE THREATENED WITH  
DESTRUCTIVE MOTORIZED USE**

Action needed by Monday, August 2



*Protect the Adirondacks* has decided to make an all out effort to oppose an amendment to the Jessup River Wild Forest Plan because it would increase the use of snowmobiles in a major way and begins what is essentially a road building program in our Forever Wild Forest Preserve. Please send comments in opposition to the Jessup River Wild Forest amendment to the APA and other officials, stating your very strong objections to the Plan by sending the emails below.

If the Adirondack Park Agency (APA) approves the amendment, in disregard of the State Constitution's ban on unnecessary tree cutting and the mandates of the State Land Master Plan, it would allow the construction of snowmobile roads up to **12 feet wide** and build many over-engineered new bridges through miles of the Jessup River Wild Forest. These will be the first approved segments of a park-wide network of snowmobile roads. Once built these roads will be used by all terrain vehicles (ATV's), whether allowed officially or not.

The proposed roads will be built smooth and level enough to accommodate the two-ton snowmobile groomers necessary to harden snow into the connector highways desired by snowmobilers.

Excavators will carve out side-slopes through what should be protected landscapes. Ten-foot-wide bridges will be built to accommodate heavy groomers as well as up to three-ton excavators, allowing them to cross streams and wetlands. These roads will not have "essentially the same character as a foot trail" as required by the Adirondack Park State Land Master Plan.

Our official comments on this issue, and background on snowmobile legal issues are at: <http://www.protectadks.org/data/>

By Monday, August 2, please cut and paste the following email to:

APA [jconnol@gw.dec.state.ny.us](mailto:jconnol@gw.dec.state.ny.us) DEC [rkdavies@gw.dec.state.ny.us](mailto:rkdavies@gw.dec.state.ny.us)

Gov. Patterson

<http://www.state.ny.us/governor/contact/GovernorContactForm.php>

Assembly Leader Silver [speaker@assembly.state.ny.us](mailto:speaker@assembly.state.ny.us)

Or send a letter to:

James Connolly, Deputy Dir. -Planning

Adirondack Park Agency

P.O. Box 99

Ray Brook, NY 12977

I oppose the Adirondack Park Agency's approval of the unit management plan amendment that would permit the building of new snowmobile roads in the Jessup River Wild Forest Unit. If the amendment were approved, it would allow big, powerful machines to go roaring and racing through the forest preserve at high speeds. Carving up side-slopes with 3-ton excavators to accommodate large tracked groomers used for smoothing the snow surface is road construction, not trail-building, and violates the *Adirondack Park State Land Master Plan*. The Jessup River Wild Forest UMP amendment would further degrade the wild character of lands the State is charged to protect on behalf of all New York citizens, and this destruction must not be allowed.

We cannot stop the State from adopting the Jessup River Wild Forest UMP amendment alone, and we call upon environmental groups and concerned citizens across the state to come to the aid of our Forever Wild Forest Preserve. We ask you to contact your local Senators and Assembly members by Monday, August 2, to help us stop this ill-conceived, illegal, and destructive snowmobile road building project on our "forever wild" forest preserve in the Adirondack Park.

## DEVELOPING THE SIGN ON LETTER

A "sign-on letter" which carries signatures of multiple environmental organizations, carries more weight than one from a single group because it shows many organizations are working together from a common position. The example below is from a successful campaign that prepared a sign-on letter\* from thirty groups, sent it to the decision makers then added graphics and ran it as a full page newspaper ad.

Sign-on letters put decision makers on notice that their actions are widely observed, and are particularly useful when a decision maker begins proposing illegal or bad ideas; is in transition; or vulnerable to outside pressure. It is most effective against entities that haven't received much prior public criticism from environmentalists. Sign-ons can persuade formerly good agencies that have started going bad to change their ways. They work best where the fix is not in, the agency is not corrupt, and the public's mind is open or on your side. They can bring new or emerging problems to the attention of regional or state environmental groups, identify which are on your side and establish critical first contacts. Sign-ons work best when most environmental organizations in an area agree on what should be done. But even when local groups don't get along, they probably agree on actual policy most of the time and where they do and a sign on is required, they should temporarily bury the hatchet to appear united.

For example, a sign-on letter might be a good tool if a small county with a new convention center sued a land management agency to give ATV's access to long closed roads in a wilderness. A letter with signatures from national groups in large metropolitan areas might dissuade them - especially if the publicity alarmed the county's business, economic development and tourism interests.\*\*

Sign-on letters are less useful where bad agency practices are long standing and enjoy wide public support. A sign on letter opposing illegal federal lands logging in Idaho or abusive public lands grazing practices in Utah might actually create good PR for the targeted Federal agencies.

In a campaign to stop a rural Oregon county seeking to remove protections for the Western Snowy Plover and open ocean beaches and dunes to ATV's, a three state 30 organization sign on letter was prepared and distributed to the County Commissioners\*\*\*. Then graphics and a response form were added and it ran as a full page ad shown below in the main newspaper in the county. A case study of this successful campaign which used the "zone defense" organizing strategy is [here](#).

The sign on letter was initiated by a rural volunteer organization that called environmental organizations in 3 states soliciting sign-ons; a [web site](#) for the campaign was created by a 2nd Oregon Organization; a 3rd in Washington State assembled the final letter and acted as lead organization; a 4th in Southern California donated a lawyer to approve the text of the letter and ad.

Some strong Snowy Plover and beach protection advocates in all three states refused to sign onto this letter. This is expected as in any campaign the unique circumstances of a particular group may preclude its public support at a particular time and of course some environmental organizations won't cooperate with certain other groups no matter what is involved. An important part of the Plover sign-on letter is the list of cc's that included the thought leaders and elected officials in the region. When the campaign began most of them supported lifting Plover protections as it was presented as a way to attract more ATV's to the coast from urban areas. But as the sign-on was distributed local governments and Chambers of Commerce began revoking endorsements - some quite publicly. A few worried we would launch a boycott, the nightmare scenario regional business promotion interests fear above all else.

### Mechanics of sign-on letters

Since groups at a distance may not be familiar with your issue it is a good idea to set up a web site for the campaign. This is the one set up for the Plover campaign. It contained everything anyone would need to become knowledgeable on the issue.

If you begin a letter and there are Audubon and Sierra Club organizations in your area, ask them to sign on first. If you don't, distant regional groups or state umbrella organizations will wonder why. It is far better to say they refused and explain their reasons than not to have even asked. Groups are willing to sign letters even if other groups refuse, but might balk if they think they are unwittingly taking sides in a local inter-organizational conflict. Local Audubon organizations (called Chapters) are often independent from their state offices but Sierra Club organizations generally think and act as one. Most states have environmental councils or coalitions and are happy to cooperate once you line up local groups.

After a group signs on, never change your letter unless you go back and clear the new language. Make sure you think things through before you hit the send button. Afterwards send every signatory organization a final copy and a thank you.

Issue a press release announcing your sign-on letter, as it is a very newsworthy form of “earned media” and will be treated by local media as hard news.

Sign-on letters are valuable tools that help organizations become acquainted with and improve their relationships with other like-minded groups. They keep agencies honest and concentrate the energy of many independent uncoordinated fingers into a fist.

\* Original four page sign-on letter is [here](#)

\*\*Actual example except instead of a sign on letter telling them to stop promoting ATV's, the convention center was the site of a nationwide wilderness convention.

\*\*\* The county failed to increase ATV access to Oregon beaches and the County Commissioner who promoted the idea was subsequently voted out of office. Last year (2009) Oregon Beaches had 208 Western Snowy Plovers, the highest since 1990 when they had dwindled to 50.

# OPEN LETTER TO COOS COUNTY FROM CONCERNED WEST COAST ORGANIZATIONS



The undersigned organizations and our tens of thousands of members are extremely concerned about Coos County's resolution of January 16, 2002 to use county taxpayers' money to challenge the Snowy Plover Critical Habitat Designation under the Endangered Species Act. The modest beach restrictions provided by this Designation protect nesting areas of this small and lovely bird, which depends on our ability to preserve unspoiled sandy beaches. The restrictions have only minimal effects on you and your county. However, your county's lawsuit, if successful, will nullify the careful public processes that have resulted in an active recovery program for this fragile and legally threatened bird along the entire West Coast.

Many counties enjoy this bird and welcome its presence on their beaches as a source of both enjoyment and economic advantage. Tens of thousands of children have been actively involved with Western Snowy Plover education field trips in Southern California alone. Dozens of other counties have found that modest and necessary protections for the Snowy Plover will lead to increased tourism through higher numbers of birders, students and travelers. These groups contribute greatly to the communities they visit both economically and culturally.

The Federal protection applies only to public lands or to projects using Federal funds or permits. It only limits access to the dry sand portion of a few beaches during the nesting season. This is why most communities go beyond the Federal government's requirements and do even more to protect this elusive shorebird. Recovery for the rare Snowy Plover in Oregon entails increasing its population from 100 to 250 birds. Coos County can hasten the recovery process by positively redirecting your county's interest in the Snowy Plover to improving law enforcement over illegal motorized use of county beaches.

If successful, your county's suit will directly benefit two narrow interest groups: (1) advocates of motorized access to West Coast beaches, and (2) developers who need Federal funds or permits to build on parcels of privately owned ocean front property. At the very minimum, your county's suit will divert the scarce resources now available for recovery

efforts for the Snowy Plover into the paperwork necessary to defend against the suit. Whether it is successful or not, this suit will not help ongoing recovery efforts for the Western Snowy Plover.

We ask the Commissioners of Coos County to abandon the current county position as it relates to the Snowy Plover. In the spirit of stewardship, we ask you to join us and other counties in our efforts to protect the critical habitat necessary for the survival of this species.

As coastal neighbors we ask you to take these three positive steps:

1. Revoke the County resolution of January 16, 2002 that challenges the Critical Habitat Designation for the Western Snowy Plover.

2. In its place, please pass a resolution declaring that Coos County will work cooperatively with other counties and federal and state agencies to aid in the recovery of the Western Snowy Plover. This resolution should declare your county's support for the necessary minimal beach restrictions designed to protect Snowy Plover habitat during the breeding season.

3. Use the financial resources that the county committed to challenge the Critical Habitat Designation for increases in law enforcement budgets. These funds should be used to enforce existing laws against illegal motorized vehicle use on your county's beaches. All counties have the responsibility to enforce the laws that govern motor vehicle use on their beaches and in critical habitat areas.

Coos County beaches are among the loveliest on the West Coast. In addition to providing a place for the citizens of the county to relax, recreate and enjoy nature, they provide essential habitat for a variety of wildlife species, including the Western Snowy Plover. The nesting grounds of the Snowy Plover are in critical condition, and we urge you to support continued protection for these threatened birds. We hope that you will act as exemplary stewards of the lands that these birds depend on, and we look forward to working with you.

Alex Morgan  
Conservation Coordinator  
Seattle Audubon Society, WA

Jim Britell  
President  
Kalmiopsis Audubon Society, OR

Regna Merritt  
Executive Director  
Oregon Natural Resources Council

Tim Cullinan  
Science Director  
Audubon Washington

Caroline Bauman  
President  
Oregon Shores Conservation Coalition

Wayne Pray  
President  
Palomar Audubon Society, CA

Phil Mattocks  
President  
Kittitas Audubon Society, WA

Carolyn Oppenheimer  
President  
San Fernando Valley Audubon, CA

Edith R. Lindner  
President  
Rogue Valley Audubon Society, OR

Neal Anderson  
President  
Sea And Sage Audubon Society, CA

Jim Conley  
President  
Salem Audubon Society, OR

Joel Kuperberg  
Conservation Chair  
Vashon-Maury Island Audubon, WA

Marina Skumanich  
Conservation Chair  
Seattle Audubon Society, WA

Brook Evans  
Executive Director  
Endangered Species Coalition, DC

Paul Engelmeyer  
Director, Ten-Mile Creek Sanctuary  
National Audubon Society

Tom Dimitre  
Chair, Oregon Chapter  
Sierra Club

Mary Prinson  
Conservation Co-Chair  
Santa Monica Bay Audubon, CA

Ileen Weber  
Vice President  
Pillchuck Audubon Society, WA

Dr. Ray Nolan  
President  
Cape Arago Audubon Society, OR

Jess Morton  
President  
Palos Verdes/South Bay Aud., CA

Mary Ann Wilcox  
President  
Umpqua Valley Audubon, OR

David Stone  
Conservation Chair  
Lane County Audubon Society, OR

Jim Fairchild  
President  
Audubon Society of Corvallis, OR

Steve Aslanian  
Conservation Chair  
Skagit Audubon Society, WA

Gretchen Starke  
Conservation Chair  
Vancouver Audubon Society, WA

Barbara Burke  
Chair, Board of Directors  
Morro Bay Winter Bird Festival, CA

Zane Ziemer  
President  
Citizens For Florence, OR

Tim McKay  
Executive Director  
Northcoast Environmental Center, CA

Larry Glass  
South Fork Mountain Defense, CA

Robin Smith  
President  
Sequoia Audubon Society, CA

Cynthia Elkins  
Program Director  
Environmental Protection Information Center, CA

Joanna Frawley  
Co-President  
Morro Coast Audubon Society, CA

Bonnie Joyce  
Chairperson  
Friends of the Coquille River, OR

State Conservation Committee  
Audubon Washington

Thomas Jervis, PhD  
President  
New Mexico Audubon Council

Michael Klem  
Conservation Chair  
Siskiyou Audubon Society, OR

Diane F. Beck  
Conservation Co-Chair  
Sierra Club  
North Group, Redwood Chapter, CA

**Call or write the Coos County Commissioners and ask them NOT to file this lawsuit.**

**Coos County Commissioners:**  
250 No. Baxter St., Coquille, OR 97423  
Nikki Whitty, [nwhitty@co.coos.or.us](mailto:nwhitty@co.coos.or.us), 396-3121 x247  
Pete DeMain, [pdemain@co.coos.or.us](mailto:pdemain@co.coos.or.us), 396-3121 x281  
John Griffith, [jgriffith@co.coos.or.us](mailto:jgriffith@co.coos.or.us), 396-3121 x248

**VOLUNTEER TO HELP STOP THIS SUIT**  
call 344-0675 or [onrcdoug@efn.org](mailto:onrcdoug@efn.org).  
For more facts on Griffith's lawsuit: <http://www.onrc.org/snowyplover/>

## SEIZE UNEXPECTED OPPORTUNITIES.

Attacks on the environment by developers and extractors can be wonderful new opportunities to do things that would not have been possible absent the threat in the first place. A successful campaign may not just defeat a bad proposal; it may provide an opportunity to achieve new goals and environmental protections that would never have happened if the threat never arose. I remember one timber sale appeal where, after the Forest Service withdrew the sale, the activists asked for the land to be reclassified and withdrawn from the timber base and the Forest Service agreed. Not only was the sale stopped, but the reclassification of the land meant that a sale in that area would probably never be attempted again.

Remember how Israel got Jerusalem back? When its neighbors attacked, Israel pushed its enemies back to their original borders and then further and took some of their territory too. Israel ended up with much more territory than it began with. It now controls the whole city of Jerusalem: a feat it could never have accomplished without first being attacked.

In one campaign, a developer owned 400 acres of land and wanted to develop five acres of it. He was finally successful after a prolonged process with many appeals, but was so frustrated by the hassle, he gave up on developing the rest of it. In that situation, activists accomplished a larger goal than they had any hope of reaching. The environmentalists lost one small battle, but won a larger war.

Developers will often make a proposal to develop a specific area, such as a thousand acres, when they really hope to get only half that area—500 acres—as a "compromise" solution. If you counter with an alternative of a thousand acre park on those same acres, it may place you in a better bargaining position. The only way to avoid bad guys bothering you all the time is to teach them that when they try something, they can end up worse than where they started. The momentum, the organizing, the public interest, and the data collection any campaign creates, can often be used to accomplish greater ends than merely solving your immediate problem.

Conversely, some environmentalists have read too many Dave Foreman books and, dazzled by ambitious "Wildlands Project" thinking, have launched major campaigns to protect regional landscapes without doing the necessary grassroots political organizing first. Some have ended up not only with failed campaigns, but have invigorated and energized the "wise-use" patriots and "militias" who are emboldened to try to rollback protections already in place. So losing ground and being behind where you were when the play began can happen in environmental campaigns as well as in football games.

The hardest part of a campaign is when your opposition sees you are organized and then they will offer a compromise: a "win-win" solution. Some of the people in your group may be weary and ready to compromise. If you have proposed specific alternatives, you may be in a stronger position to resist bad compromise solutions and can avoid giving up anything. The compromise could be what your opposition expected to get from the outset. Make sure your core people are together on potential outcome alternatives, so offers to settle and compromise do not come by surprise and destabilize your group. If your alternative to a scheme to develop 1000 acres is a 20,000 acre park, you can always offer to settle for a 10,000 acre park as a reasonable compromise. But absent an alternative, you may well find that offers to settle for a 500 acre development seem reasonable and attractive to some of your members.

If all you do is always end up back where you started you will not discourage the bad guys. They will just come back again and again.

#### CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE, NONVIOLENT AND OTHERWISE.

Civil disobedience and other "actions" like being chained to a tree seldom stop bad projects. They may serve a variety of useful functions and memorialize or ceremonialize losses but usually don't actually stop anything. Civil disobedience is a last resort, never the first. Protests cannot replace or substitute for community organizing, filing lawsuits and appeals, etc. More and more, reactionary elements try to label all forms of pro-environmental activity as "eco-terrorism." It is important that activists avoid anything that would give the appearance of being sympathetic to or engaging in illegal activities. For example, avoid being drawn into discussions about violence, even in jest. Bitter experience has proven that agent provocateurs and journalists can deliberately lead conversations and even stage photographs ("Hey, let's do a crazy photograph as a joke.") in an attempt to entrap or discredit law-abiding activists who are working within the system. If you ever have a question as to whether any conversation is inadvisable, imagine listening to a transcript of it being read to a grand jury. Sensible activists never associate with, talk about, or remain physically proximate to people discussing illegal activities. This is because most of the time such people are working for the other side in an effort to discredit you. A good indicator that someone is a plant from the other side is if he or she tries to draw you into conversations that involves the use of violence.

Since I have never engaged in any kind of civil disobedience and have never even participated in picketing I am not in a position to advise on these kinds of strategies. But there are a lot of folks, like the Ruckus Society, who will teach civil disobedience tactics to those who believe these approaches are effective. Of course in some situations, civil disobedience may be the only tool left to activists. In Canada for example, the absence of enforceable environmental laws means mass protests, where hundreds are arrested have been the only way environmentalists have been able to get the government's attention. In the U.S. from time to time protests have sometimes delayed clearcutting long enough for a court to issue injunctions in situations where absent the protests, the trees would have been on the ground by the time the court acted. Of course if the U.S. Government itself engaged in an illegal activity, civil disobedience protests would be an appropriate response.

But civil disobedience is always a last resort, not the first one, and I have always found that if you have one well-prepared person at a meeting in January, you won't need to consider chaining yourself to a bulldozer the following December. In life, the hard way is usually the best way, and the best way to protect your local environment is with the careful, systematic, mundane, unglamorous, and methodological approaches discussed in this handbook.

#### PREPARATION FOR PUBLIC MEETINGS.

There are two kinds of meetings that campaigns need to thoroughly prepare for: officially sponsored agency meetings controlled by public officials and meetings a campaign organizes to educate the public. Careful advance work is essential for both.

#### Formal meetings set up by public bodies

An important aspect of any campaign is the quantity and quality of public attendance at any forum or meeting where officials receive input about your issue. All decision makers factor

public opinion into their decisions and will assess public concern from what citizens say and do in meetings. Thus, getting your group to show up for public meetings and prepared to do what is necessary when they get there, is an important element in any successful campaign. Your goal is always to get more people to turn out than the opposition and for your side to be the best prepared group in attendance.

Your group must thoroughly prepare written and oral presentations. Handouts and visual materials are useful. Be businesslike and avoid ranting or personalizing issues. Systematically introduce the legal, scientific, and political arguments to buttress your case. Raise your issue at every public meeting that decision makers attend, either by inclusion as an agenda item or speaking up during the citizen input portion scheduled at most official meetings.

Try to provide a mix of professional and lay testimony. Don't make your presentations so confrontational, complicated or longwinded they confuse or alienate people. Brainstorm every technical angle to determine where the project is vulnerable. Find professionals who will testify or provide arguments to help your case. Every environmental campaign presents its own unique issues and thus requires its own particular resources. For a timber sale it might be the testimony of a forester, botanist, hydrologist, or geologist. For a golf course, testimony from a pesticide expert may be useful.

For citizen input, recruit concerned speakers who can make rational articulate arguments. Support your witnesses with an audience to give them moral support. When you recruit people to attend meetings, be sensitive to what each one is capable of doing. Someone afraid to speak in public may be willing to attend to clap for people who testify. Arrive early to obtain seats. Don't sit all bunched together like a clique or claque; mix into the audience.

#### Meetings setup by your campaign

Organize meetings to ripen your issue. Meetings are "hard news". Advance publicity and the subsequent news reports about the meeting provide two "earned media" opportunities to further your message. Large attendance will show that your issue is important and has gained public support. Newspaper stories about the meeting provide objective third-party hardcopy to send to agencies and elected officials and can be used as attachments to letters, petitions, etc.

Make sure other community organizations in your area know about your meeting. To increase turnout have volunteers phone to remind people of the meeting's time, place and importance. A press release announcing your meeting is important, but careful advance work on the telephone may increase the attendance by three or four times. This is where your well-designed, one page alert will be useful. With revision it can serve as a poster or as the body of your press release.

Churches and schools are often excellent contacts to increase turnout at your meeting. Leave flyers with sympathetic teachers to give to high school students.

The goal of any meeting is to create action: sign up new volunteers, sign petitions and write letters, collect donations, or to organize volunteers to participate in canvassing. Prepare form letters or postcards with a preprinted message for the audience to sign and/or allow time at the end of the meeting for people to write letters in their own words. Don't forget to furnish paper,

envelopes, and pens. Put stamps on the envelopes and mail them. A meeting that does not produce concrete actions is a wasted opportunity.

A well-written email alert sent to 2,000 activists will probably result in fewer than thirty letters or phone calls, but a public meeting where prepared postcards are passed out for people to sign can result in hundreds of pieces of mail. For example, handouts with three identical preaddressed postcards: one to an agency's headquarters, one to their regional office, and one to a representative will generate three postcards from each person. Recently a campaign made a series of public slide shows and at the end of each meeting, people were asked to fill out multiple postcards. This resulted in over 4,000 pieces of mail addressed to different levels of government. A single public meeting where the above steps are taken will result in more written material than a five minute piece on national television. Another effective use of a thousand postcards is a press conference you have organized to deliver several large boxes directly to the decision makers.

Anyone motivated enough to come to a meeting will be motivated enough to give money too, but only if they are specifically asked. A contribution can on a table by the door may produce a few dollars, but if you ask the audience to contribute, hold up the can, and then pass it around, you will get ten times as much. Don't be afraid or embarrassed to pass the hat. Left to their own initiative to give money, people never contribute much, but they do respond to direct appeals. Identify people in your group who don't mind asking others for money and have them make the direct appeal pitch at public meetings.

### Meetings Checklist

1. Be sure you have reserved a large enough space and have enough chairs.
2. Arrive early to turn on the heat, start the coffee and hot water for tea, open or close windows, and set up the spokesperson's table. Make sure you have all the necessary audiovisual equipment including long enough extension cords and an extra bulb for the slide projector. It takes a while to turn cold water into fifty cups of coffee, so don't wait until twenty minutes before your meeting to discover that the 100 cup coffeepot you borrowed from the church hasn't been cleaned in five years.
3. Prepare an agenda. Meet with key people prior to the meeting to decide what will be covered and how long they will speak.
4. Set up a table with relevant materials: posters, sign up sheets, buttons, handouts, donation can, etc. Schedule volunteers to cover the table throughout the meeting to answer questions, signup volunteers etc.
5. Have a sign in sheet at the door and encourage visitors to use it. This will provide leads and contacts for future volunteers.
6. Prepare name tags for core members.
7. Greet the press and hand them any available handouts, fact sheets or video tapes, etc.
8. Make sure some speaker specifically covers the points of what is needed, and the types of jobs that will require volunteers to canvass, raise funds, make calls, attend public meetings, etc.

9. Designate someone to handle donations: collecting, depositing, recording etc.

10. Provide refreshments like coffee, tea, cookies, cake. Make sure you have enough cups, cream and sugar, napkins, plates, forks, spoons, etc.

11. Think about how the room works physically. For example, make sure your room set up ensures that late arrivals or early departers don't have to walk between a presenter and the audience or a projection screen to get in and out of the room. Check out the bathrooms and their supplies.

Advance preparation, double-checking details and leaving nothing to chance are the keys to successful public meetings. I remember looking in a large conference room at 7:00am for a meeting of 300 people scheduled to begin at 8:00am, and finding to my horror that a banquet from the previous night had not been cleared away. Because I had arrived early to double-check the physical space, we were able to get it all cleaned up and the sound system and seating set up in time for the meeting to go on without a hitch.

For additional information on how physical space arrangements affect negotiating sessions and the offices of non-profit organizations see Appendix #11, #12, and #13

#### Dealing with confrontations in meetings

The vast majority of campaigns are businesslike and seldom create personal confrontations, but for some issues and in some areas of the country, public meetings on environmental issues can occasionally subject activists to bullying and personal threats.

The overwhelming majority of personal threats, while unnerving, never result in physical harm. Fortunately there is an excellent book, "The Gift of Fear" by Gavin Becker, devoted to analyzing, evaluating, and responding to threats. It is required reading for anyone who fears physical harm from another person. An industry exists to provide personal security to famous people who receive death threats every single day. When security firms have to decide whether to deploy armed guards around-the-clock to provide safety for their clients, they must know when to take a threat seriously and when it can be disregarded. There is a large body of insight drawn from analyzing many tens-of-thousands of threats about who makes them, the form they take, and what results to expect from them. When people do harm to others, there are predictable precursors and patterns followed. The "Gift of Fear" shows how to increase your personal security by being able to recognize and analyze threats and how to avoid personal behaviors that increase your risk.

Environmentalists tend to be polite and businesslike and generally comport themselves agreeably and peacefully. But sometimes "wise-use" goon squads try to intimidate our spokespersons and must be dealt with. If you mobilize people to go to a meeting where they are verbally abused and threatened, and you make no defense, you can forget about ever having them attend another meeting. If a "call and response" situation is allowed to escalate and get out of hand in a public meeting, it can utterly demoralize and rout campaign volunteers and anybody else in attendance. Fortunately people who shout out ugly stuff in meetings are usually cowards and generally stop if they are met with a firm response. A feeding frenzy won't gather momentum if you don't let it.

Once people know you will not be intimidated, subsequent meetings will generally be free from ugly confrontations.

Jim Weaver, a former congressman from Southern Oregon, represented a district equally composed of environmentalists and "wise-use" people. He was an ardent environmentalist and wrote "Two Kinds", a book that dealt with the psychological and biological mechanics of the hawk and dove mentality. He had to deal with both throughout his career and made a study of these two personality types. He concluded that about half of the bullies (or hawks) are really chickens and collapse at the first sign of any resistance to their goon squad tactics.

If you expect to encounter disruptive people, cultivate and bring to meetings your own assertive people—preferably large people with an "attitude." Then when goons interject loud interruptions, you can respond in kind, in a tit-for-tat fashion. Never start confrontations, but don't shrink from them either. One or two nasty remarks can be overlooked, but if ugliness gathers momentum and gains in volume, just give as good as you get. After you have handled a few of these situations, your own folks will become more comfortable with conflict and paradoxically, you may find it easier to get your folks to attend events where ugliness is likely to surface.

If you have a serious, well-founded fear that large numbers of wise-use protesters will show up at your meeting, and there is a local gambling casino with motel/ conference facilities nearby, hold your meeting at the casino. Casinos forbid disruptive or troublesome people in or around their establishments and they provide the ultimate in trouble free meeting space.

If you think that "wise-use" bullies plan to disrupt your meeting, ask local law enforcement to have an officer attend the meeting. Sometimes a non-uniformed person will be sent.

You may have some people in your group who find fighting back distasteful and insist that your group not respond in kind. I have found that people who profess to be totally unable to deal with public conflict often have no problem with, and even seem to enjoy, getting nasty and assertive with members in their own group. When these sensitive plants make their case for the group not to be confrontational, they often get into verbal fights with people on their own side. These folks only want to fight with people they perceive to be weaker than themselves.

Allowing people to abuse you or public officials in public meetings is not maintaining the high moral position of refusing to get down to their level. It is the opposite. By passively permitting abuse to be inflicted on you or your neighbors, you encourage more of it and become a complicit partner to harassment, an enabler of the behavior you seek to rise above.

Here is an important point. Never sit still for the public abuse of a decision maker. Never allow a public official to become a punching bag for bigmouth goons. When someone stands and curses a public official, YOU stand up and respond as if the remarks are directed to you personally. If you verbally interpose yourself between bullies and public officials, those officials will be in your debt forever.

Whether in the school yard, a board meeting or any public meeting, standing up to bullies indemnifies you against them, and is the best and only way to avoid fights and confrontations.

I have written on the issue of whether campaigns that focus on education rather than activism can avoid confrontation and still be effective, and about the psychology of public bullying at: <http://www.britell.com/audubon/audubon4.html> and <http://www.britell.com/audubon/audubon6.html>

These essays argue that education alone, while always important, won't stop bad schemes and projects. Some confrontation is an inevitable and an unavoidable byproduct of most successful campaigns.

And what is the absolute downside of speaking up to bullies? It's not very likely that someone would kill you for standing up for birds, fish, and other helpless creatures who cannot speak or write or come to meetings and defend themselves. Mother Nature knows when people are trying to protect her and she never fails to extend her protection to her friends. Some years ago, very early on a wintry January morning, I was in my 6th floor hotel room in Washington, D.C., preparing my testimony to a joint congressional hearing. I was the environmental witness on a panel that included several senior timber company officials. I had never testified before Congress before and everything about the trip up to that point had gone badly. I had brought an expired credit card and was very short of cash. My clothes had been lost by the airline. My original hotel misplaced my reservation and had no room available. Worse, at that time, I had a fear of speaking before large groups and was terrified that I would get stage fright when my turn came to speak. That morning was a low point in my life.

Then I heard a tap, tap, tapping on my window. When I drew the blinds, I saw there was a small brown bird on the ledge, in the snow, pecking away at my window. He looked up at me. Instantly all my fear left me and I felt as if he had been sent to cheer me up or tell me not to worry. Later that afternoon I gave my testimony confidently even though the hearing had standing room only, was overflowing into the hall, and could have been very intimidating.

If I had to distill everything I have learned about environmental activism into one sentence, it would be this: Never think Mother Nature loves you, but when you do her work, she does hers, and will never fail to provide you with the strength and courage to cope with anything or anybody, anywhere.

### **CHAPTER 3: HOW TO MOTIVATE OTHERS TO HELP YOU**

*(People generally won't do what they say they will do until you remind them a few times.)*

Most campaigns eventually find it necessary to reach out beyond their core group to obtain help from others. Some campaigns may require assistance from other organizations in their local community. Others may require the active involvement of Congressmen or organizations on the other side of the country. On rare occasions aid or information may even be required from people in other countries. The following identifies when you need help or aid from a distant location and the mechanics of getting the active cooperation of others.

#### **GETTING HELP AT A DISTANCE.**

Sometimes your local elected representative will not be supportive of your campaign, or may oppose it. Then you will have to enlist the aid of distant environmental groups to lobby their

representatives to overcome your representative's opposition. An environmentalist in New Mexico won't be able to get his senator to oppose converting public land grazing leases to outright ownership (his local senator probably wrote it). Nevertheless, a senator from Vermont might be able to stop it. A forest abuse has yet to be invented that will motivate an Oregon rural state legislator to squeak, but the representatives from Portland's districts might be willing to do battle. So an essential part of doing grassroots activism is knowing how to enlist the help of elected officials in other districts and states. For the purposes of illustration, the following is an example of a campaign strategy to get a federal representative in another state to cosponsor a piece of environmental legislation. But the process would apply to getting any elected official from outside your district to support your cause.

#### Enlisting distant environmental groups (Checklist):

Remember environmental groups have limited political capital to use in lobbying their local representatives and you are asking them to use some of it to help your cause.

1. Set up a phone log. A file folder works nicely to keep an ongoing record of your contacts: dates of calls, names, addresses, phone numbers, and summaries of your conversations. Make a note of follow-up strategies and dates. Keep this log by your phone and remember to record all activity from start to finish.
2. Know something about the environmental organization you are calling. Accurate names, addresses, and phone numbers are a must to prevent embarrassment and wasting time when tracking people down. Note: environmental organizations' phone numbers and email addresses may be as much as 50% outdated.
3. Know something in advance about the distant representative's position on your issue. The League of Conservation Voters and other national groups keep historical scorecards on all elected representatives' voting history. The Internet can provide a lot of information about what elected officials think about issues. Particularly helpful are the online newspapers in the representative's district. Also online is the Congressional Record where you can retrieve anything any representative has said by typing in a keyword. Don't overlook calling the representative's Washington D.C., or in-district office and talking to the staff person in charge of natural resources. Most staff people are courteous and helpful, even those who work for elected officials thought to be anti-environmentalists.
4. Be aware of the local political ecology. Each state and congressional district has unique circumstances. What works in one place will not always work in another. Does the representative have many active environmental organizations in their district? Are you calling an urban chapter whose service area includes more than one representative?
5. Find out if there are other ongoing efforts within the same legislative district. If two environmental groups in a district approach a representative about your issue, without knowing the other is working on the same issue, this may cause problems. On the other hand, it may put pressure on the representative to take up your cause.
6. Chapters of national groups like Audubon and Sierra Club have established national and state mechanisms for lobbying on out-of-state issues. Those organizations are best contacted by their sister counterparts in your area. An Audubon chapter in the East will be responsive to an Audubon chapter in the West, but probably not to a Sierra Club chapter and vice versa.

These two essays below provide additional insight into the organizational structure of national groups, both with and without local chapters, and also statewide umbrella organizations: (<http://www.britell.com/use/use5.html> and <http://www.britell.com/use/use7.html>)

### The Initial phone call (Checklist)

Write a brief outline of what you plan to say to ensure you can cover all your points.

1. After you have introduced yourself and briefly explained your group's goal, an effective opening is to explain you cannot succeed with your project, legislation, etc. without help from other regions, hence the purpose of your phone call. Explain you have no local representatives willing to support your cause and are totally dependent on finding representatives in other areas who will stand up for your issue. Stress how important their help is to your group.
2. Ask for their commitment to help. If the person is not willing to give you an enthusiastic commitment, ask for a referral to someone who might be able to help. Expect that some groups must check with their boards, umbrella groups, or state organizations before they can commit to anything. But if you can't get a firm commitment within a short period of time, don't waste any more time or energy on that group. Move on to your next lead.
3. Be prepared for a response like: "Local representative X would cosponsor your bill or take on your issue, but the local major newspaper has run a negative editorial on that. Can someone from your area contact the representative with a press packet or visit?" Your group may be invited to speak at out-of-state environmental meetings or meet the representative's assistants.
4. An organization unfamiliar with your issue will need to be briefed in depth and persuaded that your issue is worth their time before they will make a commitment or expend their political capital in contacting their representatives. You may find that the group you are phoning has different ideas about how to solve your problem. In fact, you may find yourself lobbied to support their ideas. For example, on western federal forest protection issues, eastern environmental groups may already have well-formed ideas about the best strategy for saving forests that involve pending bills you do not support. You may find yourself lobbied to support their solutions to your problem.
5. Be specific about what you want their group to do. For example, ask their representative to cosponsor a bill; thank a representative for being a cosponsor, write letters to the editors of local newspapers, hand out your alert, show your video to their local representative or at the group's next public meeting, etc.
6. Make your requests actionable. Never expect a distant group to do original research or original writing on your issue. Make it easy for them to comply with your requests. Provide all necessary background materials: videotapes, camera ready copy for their newsletters, fact sheets, alerts, newspaper article reprints, etc.
7. Since all environmental groups receive volumes of unsolicited material—much of it goes unopened, is opened too late to be of value, or is opened and sorted by a person other than the addressee—on the face of your envelope indicate that the contents have been requested: "VIDEOTAPE AND BACKGROUND MATERIAL YOU REQUESTED" or "CAMERA READY COPY FOR YOUR NEWSLETTER."

8. Some of the most productive grassroots lobbying efforts have been achieved by people at a distance who have arranged for their representatives to view videotapes. Encourage videotapes because most people would rather watch than listen and most people unconsciously assume that material viewed on TV is true.

9. During your initial phone call work out specific agreements on what will be done, and more importantly, how you will get feedback to be sure that what was promised was done. If arrangements for this feedback are not clear up front, too often initial assurances to visit and call representatives or their staff will be implemented with tepid requests for information or timid inquiries along the lines of: "Does the congressman know about ...?" By the time you find this out, it may be too late to get your lobbying back on track. Getting people to lobby others effectively is basically a form of assertiveness training.

10. Be prepared to spend quality time on the initial contact. Don't rush your presentation. Don't let the conversation drift off the subject. Stay focused on the importance of your issue. Then obtain three commitments: the specific action you want and expect, a postcard or phone call to confirm the actions were done, and the timelines for those two steps. When your contact agrees to send you copies of letters and responses and to give you feedback by postcard or phone by agreed dates, then and only then, do you know you have a serious commitment.

#### Follow-up – the key to getting help from others (Checklist)

1. Right after the person makes the above commitments is the time to mutually arrange for how you will follow up to make sure the agreed upon actions were done as promised. Aim for two weeks after your initial phone call. If you wait to follow up until after you realize from non-response that the expected actions were not done or done differently or more tepidly than you had expected, it will be awkward as your contact will be defensive and you will be in a "Who dropped the ball?" situation.

2. Give them a preaddressed postcard to notify you of the details of how they followed through. Ask for copies of any letters sent to their representatives or letters to the editor. Request copies of any replies they receive, either positive or negative. Negative responses and reactions are often useful to send along to the lobbyists of the national environmental groups to help them calibrate their lobbying for that particular representative on all the other issues they work on.

Debt collector training always emphasizes that someone is far more likely to perform promised actions when they know they will be called back by a specific date to discuss agreed upon commitments. Telephone scripts furnished to debt collectors emphasize that specific follow-up arrangements are essential if you expect verbal agreements to produce the desired action.

3. Provide ongoing feedback on the results of your campaign to everyone who helped, especially those in other districts and states. Often groups won't know if their contacts bore fruit. For example, if a representative signs on as a cosponsor of a bill, you should inform and congratulate your contact and thank them profusely for their help. Unfortunately this is seldom done but very important. Future favors will be much easier if actions are acknowledged and appreciated. The best appreciation is always reciprocation. Distant contacts may need help from your representatives and your organization on their issues just as much as you need them to help you.

## MOBILIZING AND MOTIVATING LOCAL PEOPLE.

Once you identify an environmental problem and begin to organize to solve it, you will probably find that many people feel the same way you do and have been waiting for someone to ask them to be involved. Spell out exactly what they must do: attend a meeting, write a letter, donate some money, etc. Your task is to mobilize their concern into a campaign of action.

Your most important resource is the active members in your organization. However, often overlooked as a powerful but untapped resource are the friends and relatives of your members who live elsewhere. If your issue concerns resources under the control of public agencies or there is a refusal by public officials to enforce laws, then it falls under state or federal jurisdiction. Members of the House or Senate committees with jurisdiction over the agencies involved can be very helpful. But these members often represent districts far away from you. For example, for western federal natural resource issues, the legislators most likely to be the most sympathetic and the most influential are often from New England and the eastern seaboard. Conversely, western representatives are often the most helpful and sympathetic to eastern environmental issues.

An activist, whose family is across the country in the district of a representative who chairs an important committee, may be able to ask their relatives to call that representative on behalf of your issue. Once we needed to lobby Senator Byrd of West Virginia. We found an activist from a coalmining family in West Virginia and he was able to use his back-home contacts to reach Senator Byrd who is generally indifferent to letters and calls from outside his state.

With the growth of email, peoples' circle of friends and family are much wider and more active than ever. All the family members of all your active supporters are potential allies of your cause. The most dramatic and effective lobbying comes from inside the district of an elected representative. So be sure to tap the most overlooked resource for winning campaigns, your members' families and friends.

Another effective tool is letter-writing parties. Group situations remove many of the psychological and procrastination problems that arise when people are asked to write their elected officials. Additionally, such gatherings are authentic experiences, as opposed to the synthetic experiences that characterize so much of what people do today. Strong social bonds will form among the participants, and anything that fosters this tends to provide needed moral and social support for your spokespersons.

If you are soliciting others to write letters, make phone calls to elected officials and decision makers, or come to meetings, when you get commitments, remind them to ask their spouses and children to write, attend, and take action too. Often if someone is interested in an issue, their close family members will be too. Most people wouldn't think to ask another family member to become involved unless you specifically ask them to do so.

### How to verify mail and phone campaigns

Staffers in public affairs departments of public agencies are usually happy to informally discuss the volumes and kinds of calls a campaign generates. Letters to agencies from the public are generally considered public documents and thus available for anyone's review. Monitoring calls and letters allows you to calibrate your campaign and can lead to unexpected consequences.

One campaign's goal was to convince a state agency not to build a large building on several hundred acres of pristine oceanfront land that was important bird habitat. In routinely reviewing the public comment letters to the agency, the campaign was shocked to discover that an officer and board member of the very organization conducting the campaign, had been aggressively lobbying against her group's position and had written not only pro-development letters but had disparaged the campaign, and the motivations and integrity of the groups involved. Fortunately the campaign ultimately prevailed and the development (and the board member) were dropped. But one wonders how much damage would have been done if the activists had not read all the public comment letters as a routine part of their campaign.

Articles and appeals in professional publications, newsletters, magazines, etc. are very useful for general consciousness raising, but generally produce few actual letters or action of any kind. They are most useful as informational material to send to your representatives and the local newspapers to help keep your issue alive and to create and maintain momentum.

Thank anyone and everyone who helped. Whenever someone works for your campaign or lobbies for your issue, let them know how it turned out. Thank them no matter how it went. When you win key battles, throw a party to celebrate. While problems do arise in mobilizing a grassroots campaign, once the average person gets their first exposure to the process, they will find it empowering and enjoy it.

#### ISSUES WITH PROFESSIONALS.

Professionals always lend credibility to your issue. Most people, including politicians, are impressed with credentials. Use professionals on the tasks related to their expertise. But remember, just because someone is an expert in one area does not mean they know anything about another. Scientists may be able to detect all the scientific vulnerabilities of a bad project, but may be clueless about how or when to deploy that advice in an administrative or legal setting. And a biologist probably has no better grasp of how to run an education or media campaign than you do. Use the unique and valuable expertise of professionals, but don't abdicate the management and strategy of your campaign to them. Keep professionals subordinate to your campaign manager who must control and direct the overall campaign strategy.

Talk to the scientists who work in the region; even those scientists working for the agency spearheading the bad project. Scientists have a tendency to stay as quiet as church mice, but if you privately ask them for help, they will often be happy to tell you the project's key vulnerabilities.

Don't overlook agency employees as a source of help. Activists, bitterly contending with a state and federal agency, often assume that the anti-environmental attitudes of the agency are subscribed to by its employees. Nothing is further from the truth. Most people who work for land management agencies or are professionals in the natural sciences, do so because they truly care about nature and the environment. Yet, almost every environmental outrage involves some scientist watering-down or rewriting reports to deliberately conceal and minimize environmental impacts. Over time, this can make the staff of land management agencies frustrated and even ashamed of themselves. So when you approach staff off-the-record, for help in detecting a project's weaknesses, you might be very surprised by their enthusiasm and helpfulness.

Agency managers, even those doing very bad things on their own agency's land, may nevertheless be willing to help you with an issue on another agency's land. Often the reason managers and scientists won't help activists is because they have learned the hard way that some activists are blabbermouths. People won't confide in you if they fear you will hurt them. But if they sense you are discreet and will guarantee their anonymity, they will often tell you all they know.

Often scientists who may not be willing to help you fight problems in their own agency may nevertheless be willing to help you stop bad projects at another. If you are involved with a campaign against one agency and nearby land is under the control of another, often the adjacent agency may have a lot of helpful scientific information buried in their file cabinets. For example, scientists preparing biological plans for their own agency's land often do surveys on a regional or watershed basis and come into the possession of critical information about wide-ranging animals, endemic plant species, geology or hydrology information they are happy to share. A state biologist may be unable to do much to stop bad things from happening to the fish runs in a river that flows through state land, but that same scientist may be very knowledgeable and help you protect fish upstream in that same river where it flows through neighboring federal lands.

Unfortunately some grassroots environmental organizations never get anything but official, by-the-book answers to any question from certain land management agencies. Everything has to be obtained under FOIA (Freedom of Information Act) because agency staff have learned from painful experience that the organization simply cannot keep confidences. They don't even give them information that is ordinarily available to anyone.

But if you are discreet and can use information without burning your source, it can pay huge dividends. Once I was at an agency going through a two foot stack of thirty timber sales in a room full of agency staff and managers. All morning, the lead agency scientist responded to my every attempt to find vulnerabilities in the sales with variations of "That's not a problem..." He fought me on every issue.

Later, when everyone else had gone out to lunch, the two of us stayed behind (we had brought our lunches), so were alone in the meeting room with the stack of sale folders between us. He said, "The issues you are raising are not really serious problems."

I asked, "Do you know where the serious problems are?" He said, "Sure." and I responded, "Will you show them to me?" He pulled the stack of folders over and starting at the top went through every single one pointing out the critical and fatal weaknesses in thirty timber sales. Turns out he had been unsuccessfully trying to get them stopped all along. Armed with his information, I was able to get his agency to withdraw about twenty of those sales that same afternoon.

Always be careful when you use "inside" information, that you never inadvertently disclose your source. Once I made the mistake of asking for a "lost" document with such location specificity that the agency manager could tell I could only have found out about it from one person. My source almost lost his job and has never been helpful since.

As a class, scientists have a hard time not telling the truth. You should approach them directly as individuals, rather than in their official role. Ask questions like, "How would you try to stop this project, if you were me?" or "What questions should I ask you that I haven't?" The best kept secret in grassroots environmentalism is that the vulnerabilities of most projects are brought to our attention by agency scientists who are in the position to know what the real facts are.

On the purely political level, in small rural counties that must contend with "wiseuse" politicians, employees of land management agencies often represent a large bloc of voters. In one rural county, famous for anti-environmental rhetoric from its county commissioners, such employees are, in fact, the largest single bloc of voters. Since public employees can usually engage in electoral politics and are generally progressive and educated, they represent the best possible source of votes to counter local "wise-use" candidates at election time. The combination of local environmentalists and public employees provides the best and sometimes the only chance to oust ultra right wing county commissioners. Rural federal employees and their families are often as discriminated against and harassed for being "radical environmentalists" as local activists are; sometimes even more so. Thus there is a potential political community of interest between them.

I was involved with a successful campaign where local environmentalists worked in partnership with a federal agency's union to stop a bad environmental scheme. The agency opposed the scheme too, but could take no official position. So the activists did the organizing and public relations and the agency's union raised the money for the campaign.

The likelihood of substantial cooperation and support from managers and officials declines as you go down the chain from federal to state to county to local level. The lower you go, the more insecure, timid, and afraid officials tend to be. Of course some land managers are evil people. Some are even personally corrupt, but this is rare. Most make bad decisions and carry them out because they feel they are forced to do so. Regardless of a person's reputation or that of their agency, approach them with the assumption they will do the right thing. Many will rise to your expectations. On the other hand, if you approach staff with the attitude that because they are doing bad things, they are personally bad and corrupt, they will respond accordingly.

Activists often serve a "stop me before I kill again" function for agency staff. Environmentalists can help them do the good things they really want to do and stop them from doing the bad things they don't. When activists and land managers work together symbiotically, like some management and unions can, the result is an unbeatable combination, A combination only possible if we always remember to hate the sin, but not the sinner.

#### **CHAPTER 4: THE SECRET OF USING EMAIL**

Email is an indispensable tool to activists, but overestimated as a tool to lobby and inform busy decision makers. In government offices, less and less email is read anymore. Busy decision makers are unlikely to ever see any email you send them unless a staff person prints it out and puts it in their in-basket. Unless you have the personal email address of a decision maker or otherwise know they read all their email, convert email messages to paper and send it by U.S. mail. Sometimes the best delivery vehicle for a dynamite email is via fax.

There are exceptions. Some obscure or small agencies seldom ever hear from the public. To them, a hundred emails are a significant, even an astounding event, and may turn them completely around on an issue. But offices who are lobbied constantly may not even notice a couple of hundred emails.

Email and any information you want to be actually read should go through the three essential steps described in handling news items in Chapter 6.

Because of the variety of email programs and the nonstandard way they display text, assume that anything you send by email is likely to be printed with ragged lines, broken paragraphs, odd line wraps, garbage characters and other legibility problems unless you control for this yourself. As with all communications, email needs to stand by itself. Put a short header on it to summarize its contents and specifically tell your recipient what is in it and why they should read it. For example, "This email is about the problem of XYZ and contains..."

Congressmen and senators usually have staff located in their home district and also at the capital. Don't assume that any email message sent to an office in the home district will ever find its way to the capital, or vice versa. Send separate communications or cc your message to several staff people in different locations to increase your chances of getting through to the representative. The best way to create communications with a decision maker must be figured out, (or gamed) on a case-by-case basis. I know of one staff person who never returns phone calls but reads and responds to almost every piece of email. I know of another who totally ignores email but returns all phone calls promptly. One senate aide liked to get important email at her personal email address, but would make you promise not to ever give it out or overuse it.

The subject of using and misusing email and its pitfalls as a organizing medium is discussed more fully at <http://britell.com/use/use19.html>

## **CHAPTER 5: THE SECRETS OF SUCCESSFUL LOBBYING**

*(Never overestimate the knowledge, intelligence, or courage of elected representatives.)*

Tip O'Neill spent fifty years as an elected representative, his last ten years as Speaker of the House of Representatives. He was a lifetime student of the political process and wrote a slim volume "All Politics is Local and Other Rules of the Game" in which he summarized what he had learned in a lifetime of doing politics. Anyone who intends to lobby a politician must read this book as it describes what motivates politicians, how they think, and why they do what they do. In the brief five paragraph chapter titled "How To Lobby Your Congressman Effectively," he makes only one point, that the single most frustrating thing about his experience as a politician was that when people lobbied him, he often had no idea what they were talking about. O'Neill said congressmen must deal with perhaps fifty thousand bills in each session and there is no way they can possibly know what a constituent is talking about when they refer to HR 5304 or House Resolution 543, etc. Thus when you set up an appointment with an elected official, you must tell him in advance what you wish to speak about by bill number, and more important by content. Then he will have had a chance to become familiar with your issue by the time you arrive. O'Neill said that constituents erroneously think that because a particular bill means everything to them, the congressman will know what they are talking about. But usually they don't.

We should prepare thoroughly for our lobbying campaign and implement it as best we can and then hope for the best. But what happens if your representative, despite your lobbying efforts, votes against you? When a really good politician does a bad thing, there are four things activists should do:

- Ask them to explain exactly why they did it.
- Tell them you are very disappointed.
- Ask them not to do it again.
- Forget it.

Believe it or not, highly paid lobbyists usually skip the first three. They know they have access so they don't have to sweat individual votes. With continuing access year in and year out, they know they will prevail in the long run. Therefore they cut their elected allies an amazing amount of slack and never go public on them.

Most elected officials are good people who sincerely try to reflect their constituents wishes as they understand them. Ultimately elected representatives must represent, reflect and express their constituent's views or they will not survive.

If you are embroiled in a campaign, it means your elected official is not yet convinced of the validity of your views. If they were, you would not need your campaign in the first place. Politicians usually represent the wishes of their campaign contributors, but it is NOT because they are being forced, paid or bribed to vote one way or another. It's because they are exposed more often and more forcefully to the views of developers, lobbyists, and business interests than to yours. Effective lobbying is a process of changing a representative's mind by exposing him or her to your views and to provide arguments to counter the lobbying of the bad guys. Seldom can anyone on either side of an issue dictate the way a representative will vote. In fact, it is generally highly improper and usually unproductive to demand an elected representative vote a certain way.

The problem with American money politics is that a few people get most of the face time and thus have more opportunities to persuade officials that doing the right thing and doing the developer's thing are the same thing. But if a politician intends to run again, when faced with a clear choice between the will of the voters and the will of his contributors, voters will win because voters always trump money. A good way for you to get face time is in the public meetings that politicians often hold. Attend those meetings and give your representative copies of your briefing materials. Have local people continuously raise your issue at all meetings of elected officials.

Until you know for sure, don't assume that just because a local elected official is an anti-environmentalist that they won't help you. Ask them for help anyway. In one case I was helping a local group stop a federal timber sale that involved some endangered bats. The local congressman was well-known for his virulent pro-timber, anti-forest protection views and the group insisted that talking to him about the sale was pointless. So I approached the congressman's staff person for natural resources in Washington D.C. Amazingly the staff person

had done work on that particular species of bat in graduate school and was very concerned about them. So he was more than happy to help us stop that sale, which he did with a single phone call.

When a developer wants to rezone a piece of property to build more houses on it, elected representatives will be sympathetic, but not because moneyed interests have made payoffs. Instead it will be because imaginative and attractive arguments have been made by those with face time access. It is not money per se that we struggle against, it is the access that money buys.

For an in-depth essay on politicians, politics and elections from a grassroots environmental perspective see (<http://britell.com/use/use22.html> )

#### MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES AND AGENCIES.

Most attempts at lobbying by environmental organizations are very inefficient and produce very little bang for the buck. They are mostly confined to high-profile campaigns like Arctic drilling, global warming, roadless areas or issues involving charismatic endangered animals.

People usually overestimate their elected representative's grasp of their issues. Often legislators cast votes on issues with no prior knowledge that the environmental community has any concerns about them. In fact, many pro-environmental votes are based strictly on a legislator's personal concerns or personal experiences.

Elected representatives who support bad environmental activities often do so because they have been persuaded that the proposed destructive action is the best way to protect the environment or the action is the lesser of several evils. Many "wise-use" elected representatives sincerely believe they are pursuing policies good for the environment and that environmentalists' concerns are misguided, naive efforts that may actually harm the environment. Often they think grassroots activists are agents of urban interests who want to destroy the rural way of life and drive out the local folks to lock up public land as recreation areas for urban yuppies. Agency staff may feel that way too.

But agency staff do not, can not, and will not pursue any particular political or environmental agenda that will upset the elected officials who control their budget and staff. Agencies are virtually value free and are delighted to do whatever their supervising agencies want them to do. That can be to cut trees or protect trees. Line managers have little or no ability to actually stand up against higher authorities. Picketing an agency that won't do what you want them to, is like picketing a theater ticket taker who won't let you in because you can't pay the price of admission.

Stalin once said that he never negotiated with puppets, only the people who pull their strings. For grassroots activists, agency staff are merely puppets; elected representatives control the strings.

#### **CHAPTER 6: THE MEDIA**

*(Getting lots of good press is not as important as making sure decision makers see every piece of good press you do get.)*

#### USE THE MEDIA EFFECTIVELY

Publicize your issue as much as possible and use announcements, press releases, and press conferences to generate news about your campaign. Letters to the editor are effective if they are

from as many people as possible, with each Letter focusing on different aspects of the issue. Letters in the newspaper keep your issue alive. Op-Ed pieces are always more effective than letters. To maintain momentum, your campaign needs to constantly be in front of the public. Don't ignore anti environmental letters to the editor criticizing your efforts. Respond promptly to each one in the next edition. Do not attack the person who writes the negative letter – focus on the issue.

Placing your alerts in other organizations' newsletters is a good way to reach an audience of environmentally friendly people. Most organizations will print wellwritten copy from other groups. But you should write the piece and not depend on others to do the writing for you.

Editors never know how much room they have until their newsletter is being laid out. To make your material newsletter/editor friendly, prepare alerts and "calls to action" that are camera-ready or electronically-ready to print as is in various formats: one page, half page, and quarter page so that whatever space is available, you have furnished just what the editor needs. If the editor wants a paper version, give them your copy on heavy print stock and laser printed. If the copy calls for local officials to be contacted, include those local officials' phone numbers and addresses in your copy so the editor won't have to look them up. The less work for editors, the more likely they are to use your material. Make it easy and avoid placing them in a situation where they have to edit and cut your material so it will fit. Increasingly editors want material as copy-ready email attachments.

For public events and for general public information have a video made. A video can be one of your most effective tools. Send it to newspapers, other organizations, public officials, and libraries. At a booth or table at public events, you can show it and sell it. It can be used at fund raisers too. Send it along with grant applications. If you are trying to get other organizations to help your cause ask them to show your video at one of their regular meetings.

A good video always finds many more uses than you can imagine. A video gives your campaign weight, provides an organizational focus, and enhances the seriousness of your issue. Decision makers will often not sit still for presentations, but will seldom interrupt a video. A good friend of mine made several unsuccessful attempts to give a presentation to a decision maker who lacked the attention span to sit through more than a few minutes of any presentation without interrupting, taking phone, calls etc. Finally my friend videotaped his presentation and showed it to the decision maker. They both sat there and watched, and his entire presentation was uninterrupted. People worship television. It is America's national religion and most houses provide a shrine to it in the most prominent place in the house. Most people have more respect for, and attach more probative value to someone on TV telling them something, than if the same person told them the same thing in person.

**DON'T ASSUME DECISION MAKERS WILL SEE GOOD PRESS.**

If you get a good story written about your issue, that is only a good first step. Step two: send it to your representative with a cover letter. If it is a TV piece, put it on videotape and send it to them. But just because you send an article or video to a decision maker, don't assume it will ever be seen by anyone other than the mailroom staff who will send you a routine response. To make sure a decision maker actually reads/views your material, do three things.

1. Phone the staff person with lead responsibility for the issue and tell them an important piece has been created and you are sending it to their attention. Then send it addressed to them. Confirm their exact address, as this step creates a sort of implied commitment to open and read/view your material.
2. A week later, phone again and ask if they received it. Since mail arrives in legislators' offices in hand trucks, and it piles up on staffer's desks in foot-high piles, it will probably be sitting on the staff's desk unopened. They will probably tell you it's there but they haven't got to it yet. Tell them you will phone in a week to get their reaction.
3. Telephone in a week and ask them if they have had a chance to read it. They probably will have. If not, repeat the last step. At that point, you can ask them if they will forward it to the decision maker. Elected representatives generally only read or watch material their staff has screened and forwarded to them. And even that much prescreened material will consist of large stacks of material.

You might assume that major prime time TV coverage of your issue will automatically come to the attention of decision makers without any further action on your part. Not so.

#### MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT TV COVERAGE

TV coverage, by itself, seldom results in any concrete action. For example, a one hour powerful documentary about a beautiful place under threat of clear-cut logging was seen by ten million people. That documentary resulted in less than thirty letters protesting the proposed destruction. Specials about the wonders of, and threats to, a pristine and precious place mostly generate calls and letters from vacationers who want to add that place to their itinerary before it's destroyed and other inquiries from retirees looking for a nice place to retire, NOT cards and letters to save it.

Have you ever watched a hard-hitting expose' on TV and afterwards written a letter of complaint? Probably not. No one else does either. When folks see an issue on television, they assume that because the problem was on TV, it is no longer a problem they need to attend to because now everyone knows about it. Most people are in a trance when they watch TV and don't get up from their couches to write letters and make phone calls. On the rare occasion when a TV viewer is motivated to phone an agency and complain, the call is often of a very peculiar type. They will address their concerns in such a tentative, circular and tepid way that the agency will not even know what they really want or why they called.

Nevertheless, good TV coverage of your issue can be helpful. It educates and informs, and does occasionally lead to important victories. But more importantly it provides hard, primary lobbying material that can be reproduced and delivered, preferably in person, to the legislators' offices to bolster a personal visit where you deliver a pitch.

Good television coverage is an important tool and a precursor to action, but it is not a substitute for action.

## **CHAPTER 7: HANDLING CONFLICTING GROUPS AND AGENDAS**

*(Ten groups with ten different goals are better than one group with two.)*

In the heat of a campaign you may assume everybody is on the same page. Don't wait to find out six months down the road that half your group is pushing for outright cancellation of a project, while the other half is happy to get a few improvements or concessions. A campaign established to ameliorate or soften the impact of a proposed project is very different from a campaign to kill a project outright. If your core members have different goals, it may be more effective for the group to simply split into several independent parts so each can concentrate on the particular outcome they seek. Trying to force your group to accommodate conflicting objectives doesn't usually work. At the end of a campaign papered over differences may surface with some members of the core group willing to compromise or accommodate, while some refuse and vow to fight on.

Many successful campaigns have been waged by coalitions of groups each of which had different goals and outcomes. But it is better for groups to establish their individual goals at the outset of a campaign than to have one group split apart in a campaign's end game.

Just as groups can have objectives that differ from each other, so can activists. Real diamonds and fake ones all look the same in a jeweler's case. There is the "activist" who is motivated more by the need for attention and approval and to be somebody than by concern about the environment. Such people use campaigns to work out problems or obtain personal esteem or recognition and may be more interested in their personal agenda than the environmental one. All people are vulnerable to being carried away by the personal attention of cabinet secretaries, national press coverage, invitations to speak at high-profile conventions, and helicopter trips. But some, more so than others. There is no way to tell in advance who these pseudoactivists are but they will cause a lot of problems if they assume leadership positions in campaigns.

Many activists believe this may have been the case in some high profile "partnership" groups who may have mischievously established as public policy the principle that local people should be able to overrule and preempt federal decisions about federal land. Always be alert for activists who are too needy. A symptom of this is undisclosed and unvetted ex parte or sidebar negotiations between a core group member and the opposition.

Just as a group must be vigilant about activists within its campaign it should also be careful about which outside organizations it solicits funds from. Inexperienced groups should be careful about who they seek grants from. The same group that spends three months painstakingly researching a proposed timber sale might accept funding from a foundation without any research into the background, history and motivation of its new funder. Of course, the majority of foundations are very helpful to grassroots groups and won't fund you unless they agree with your goals. But there are important exceptions. Some foundations like to direct policy and micro manage campaigns. Don't find out too late that your new foundation grant is from a foundation that experienced activists call "death stars", foundations that tend over time to extinguish activism in its grantees.

Some foundations will try to push their grantees to avoid confrontation and litigation even where these are the only viable ways to solve a problem. Perform due diligence research on foundations and seek advice from experienced organizers before you apply. Be careful that the paid staff of a grassroots group does not come to view their organization's funders as their "real" bosses. Some groups have even found that over time they have been converted into a kind of wholly owned subsidiary of their funder. Funders have been known to direct a board to remove an executive director and install their own handpicked person.

Once a campaign picks up speed, it may attract unlikely and colorful allies. Occasionally local environmental campaigns (mostly about development and sprawl) have successfully included groups as radically diverse as local environmentalists and so called "wise-use" (even militia organizations). Local property-rights nuts may hate the idea of new condos or industrial parks in their neighborhood more than environmentalists do.

However, if you form working alliances with extreme rightwing groups, keep your agenda strictly focused on specific issues you can all agree on. In one case, a rural community was threatened by outside interests who wanted to grab some federal land. The local radical right hated this because they wanted to control that land. Environmentalists thought the land needed to be saved for fish. Neither group wanted the land given away to the outsiders. A partnership was formed for a campaign to fight the land grab. The group even agreed that after they were successful (and they were), they would go back to fighting between themselves (and they have).

On another occasion, environmentalists successfully joined with a wise-use timber lobby to fight an industrial development. People who deal with both left and rightwing activists never fail to observe how much they seem to have in common.

With the conspicuous exceptions of some campaigns organized by skillful, professional "wise-use" and property-rights organizers, local right-wing interests are often disorganized and lack basic organizing skills. Often they are intimidated by environmentalists and feel our rhetorical and organizing skills are superior to theirs. Once out of pity I showed a "wise-use" group how to use bulk mail rates for their newsletter as I just hated to see them waste so much of their scarce money, month after month, on first-class postage. Later when a situation threatened to get out of hand and turn violent, I was able to call the president and reason with him and together we avoided a nasty situation.

But if you form partnerships with right-wing groups be careful not to train them in grassroots organizing. For example, don't help them create data bases: maintain them yourself. If cooperating with wise-use types becomes a possibility, be cautious, be careful, but don't dismiss it out-of-hand.

On more than one occasion, I have seen a group organized to fight environmentalists go on to accomplish some very worthwhile things. The basic problem facing rural communities is not right-wing crazies and property-rights nuts, but rather political apathy. A labor organizer once told me that he did not really care which side of the bed people got out of, as long as they got out of bed.

## **CHAPTER 8: DIFFERENT KINDS OF ORGANIZERS**

*(Activists are not necessarily organizers, but most organizers are activists.)*

Environmental activism is different from political activism and environmental organizers are different from political organizers. Confusion about the difference is central to the ineffective way the environmental movement handles many problems. When the League of Conservation Voters checked the membership lists of environmental groups against county voting records, they found that about 50% of the environmental community doesn't even vote, let alone actually work in political campaigns. Grassroots organizers need to be aware of the tools, skills and capabilities of all community based organizers so they can employ specialized tools of other kinds of organizers when appropriate. Environmental organizers can learn much from professional, political, and community organizers, but not vice versa. With some training on the issues, any professional organizer can become an enormous asset to an environmental campaign. The following should not be taken as a criticism of environmental activists who are mostly unpaid volunteers and likely to remain so. It is offered to encourage environmental organizers to take advantage of the skills and resources of their paid professional counterparts.

Community organizer is a general term and refers to any kind of organizer, usually paid, who works on issues like health, education, or nutrition that concern a whole community or a subset of it. They are usually generalists who deal with issues, both public and private, by creating community pressure on elected and unelected officials. When the group to be organized is workers who want to form a union, they are called union organizers.

Political organizers build coalitions to elect officials or influence elections. They usually work directly for a political candidate running for office. Some work for a Political Action Committee (PAC), for example a teachers' union PAC, that seeks to elect candidates sympathetic to their cause. Some work for issue based organizations like the NRA or Abortion Rights. Political organizers teach political skills and motivate people to participate directly in the political arena.

Usually they are hired for a few months during campaign season: July to November in election years. Political organizers move around from election to election and have a whole bag of analytical skills unique to political campaigns. Often political organizers start in a specialized area such as the coordinator of volunteers or managing events and work up to be campaign managers. Political organizers often leave a permanent infrastructure behind to continue the work of a candidate, issue or party.

During the political season, political organizers do a variety of tasks: from manning booths at county fairs to recruiting volunteers to participate in parades; from organizing fundraising events to putting up lawn signs; distributing buttons to writing ads; from organizing door-to-door canvasses, house parties and candidates forums to running phone banks.

On one congressional campaign I supervised the political organizers and my single biggest problem was getting them to take time to sleep. They worked fifteen to eighteen hours days between August and November without a day off. On more than one occasion I had to order staff members to go to sleep, and literally tucked them into bed. This is not an unusual work schedule for a political organizer.

Environmental activists solve specific environmental problems by influencing administrative processes and procedures at the federal, state and local level. They do not usually focus on community organizing or replacing one elected official with another. Environmentalists address agency actions and administrative decision makers by pressuring agencies and the elected officials who supervise them. Since environmental organizations are mostly non-profits, not only are they not usually involved in elections, their organizations are legally forbidden to be directly involved in political campaigns. Of course, like any citizen, environmental professionals, on their own time and with their own money, can do politics as much as they want. They just cannot use their organization's funds to do so.

## **CHAPTER 9: EXAMPLES OF SUCCESSFUL COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT**

*(Constant vigilance for big issues will solve many small ones.)*

Successful grassroots activism is much more than a series of dramatic efforts against major onetime threats. It is easy to win every major environmental battle and still lose the war. Effectively protecting a community's quality of life takes more than major campaigns, as important as they are. Successful indemnification of any area against environmental degradation requires continuous participation in diverse administrative forums. Permanent environmental protection of a federal forest, state controlled oceanfront or a city is the cumulative result of continuous participation in the many seemingly small issues that constantly arise in many diverse forums. It is in these meetings that developers, speculators and extractors seek to construct a halo of inevitability around issues of development, extraction and degradation.

The following are some examples of accomplishments by environmentalists who paid close attention to local administrative processes. They are not exceptional victories, just examples of the constant byproduct successes that occur when citizens are on the lookout for situations that can lead to big problems.

A port was making some improvements and as part of the federal grant process, they were obliged to hold a meeting to get public input. Most grants routinely require at least one formal public hearing as part of the grant approval process. They are generally pro forma and no one ever goes to them. But in this one, an environmentalist stood up and asked that the light fixtures for the port, which were to be replaced, be changed to meet "dark sky" specifications. With "dark sky" lights, all the many lights to be installed would not shine up in the sky or sideways but have caps so their light just illuminated the ground. This keeps light pollution from obscuring the stars. The managers were surprised at the suggestion, but agreed and added it to the engineering specifications. Now all the light fixtures at the port accomplish their intended purposes but they do not contribute light pollution to the area. The entire area of the coast now looks more natural, which is very important since this port can be seen from many miles away.

In another example, a community was establishing a taxing district to pay for a lake clean up. During the district's creation a little advertised meeting was held to review the maps creating the legal boundaries for the district. Only properties in the district would pay for the lake's improvements. On the northern boundary, a small jog on the map was noted along an otherwise straight line. I asked the planner, "Who owns that property?" He said it was the headquarters of the local utility company. The planner had simply drawn the map to exempt the utility from

paying the tax. I asked if it was fair to exclude them. He looked embarrassed and said, "I guess not." He proceeded to make the boundary line straight and added the utility to the tax base. All it took was that one remark.

Many proposals to clearcut national forests require major campaigns to stop them. But many do not. One time I was at a preliminary meeting where the Forest Service was to receive public comment on four timber sales. Three of them were planned in an area which had previously been clearcut. They each involved two large islands of old-growth forest connected by a strip of unlogged land. From above each looked like two cherries (the islands of unlogged forest) connected by a stem (the unlogged strip connecting them). The proposed clearcuts were planned on the stems or on a continuous strip of forest connecting two pieces of unlogged forest. When I pointed out that these cuts would create isolated islands and sever connectivity, the ranger looked at it for a minute and said, "Yeah, that's bad. We'll cancel these three." Total investment of time: half an hour.

The above are examples of someone who went to a routine public meeting, and using the citizen input provisions built into most plans and all grants that use public funds, made a long-term permanent difference with the expenditure of a few hours work. Unfortunately many federal, state, county and local meetings, held to discuss proposals with a major impact on the environment, have no environmental input at all. There are entire federal forests where no environmentalists systematically review all project proposals.

The degradation, simplification, domestication and commodification of our environment is not caused by the perfidy of public officials or the power of developers. It is the inevitable result of too few citizen activists participating in public planning processes. Early interventions often make high profile "Save This..." and "Stop That..." campaigns unnecessary.

## **APPENDIX A: HOW TO ORGANIZE A LOCAL “HATE RADIO” BOYCOTT**

Summary: Talk radio is the national communication vehicle for the radical right in the United States. Its audience is growing and the number of outlets that carry it are up 50% in the last three years to over 2000 stations. However, it has a fatal vulnerability because it delivers its message through line-of-sight terrestrial radio signals so it is entirely dependent on advertising from local merchants in each radio markets where the programs air, typically less than 50 miles in diameter. No new laws are required to stop hate radio, just boycotts that attach personal responsibility for hate speech to the people who pay for it – the local advertisers. A local car dealer who buys an ad on hate radio is essentially instigating violence and intimidation to sell cars, and his neighbors should call him on it. Boycotts of hate radio's local advertisers, typically local car dealers and other local merchants, can extinguish hate radio from the airwaves.

In America it is perfectly legal to engage in speech that implicitly encourages people to kill and harass others but it is also legal to tell the people who do so and any advertisers and radio stations associated with it that we reject that speech and any business that puts it on the air. Just because we can't infringe on anyone's right to speech, and wouldn't want to, doesn't mean we're helpless.

Hate radio is organically unaccountable for its actions and responds to criticism with even more brazen feats of projection, denial and distortion. Going on their shows or calling in is worse than hopeless because they are masters of noisy debate and all controversy just boosts ratings.

We must use our free speech to make sure that when hate speech is on the air our merchants aren't underwriting it. If hate radio can loudly pollute the civil discourse and unhinge dangerous people to violence then it is only fair that we exercise our right to not patronize local businesses that finance its existence.

### **I. WHAT IS HATE RADIO?**

Hate radio strives to instill deep feelings of unresolvable resentment and deep and bitter corrosive grievance against Democrats, progressives, liberals and moderate Republicans through a compelling apocalyptic spew of seemingly authoritative anecdotes and accusations launched from a self-appointed high ground of ethical, moral and religious authority. It seeks to convince listeners that they are being systematically lied to and cheated and humiliated by traitors who hate and loathe America and its values and want to destroy America's sense of community, the integrity of families, the military and above all Christian religious values.

Its compelling and authoritative "telling and ordering" mode of communication can supply an unbalanced mind with the imperative and rationale to strike back in righteous anger against the targets of its unrelenting rage. Hate radio uses protected but incendiary speech to provide a quasi-religious imprimatur of respectability and implicit social approval for the unhinged to act out violent impulses.

Many people believe that hate radio and TV instigated recent incidents of violence, including the murder of a women's health clinic doctor, by relentless public accusations of "murderer" and "baby killer" that also caused the intimidation and harassment of thousands of medical workers

and patients going about their private legal business. By terrorizing and killing some abortion providers the extreme right has driven most of them out of business and thus accomplished by intimidation what it could not accomplish in the courts, legislatures and the political process. Hate radio can instigate vigilantes to terrorize or kill a few people to serve as examples to frighten the many so they can impose their will—a minority will—on the majority. Since a right on paper is worthless if the local police won't protect you, hate radio seeks to reframe intimidation and harassment and goon squad tactics as an aspect of politics. Whether it is terrorizing patients at medical clinics or starting the "Brooks Brothers" riots that forced an end to the Florida recount, or of late by closing down free speech at town halls about health insurance, hate radio seeks to reframe intimidation as merely "one side" of a vigorous open ongoing political argument so local police will be discouraged from "taking sides."

Hate radio followers who kill are not remorseful afterwards, they expect to be praised, and are, by other hate radio listeners. In a chilling recent development it has succeeded in getting people to go to Congressional town hall meetings to insult, shout down and silence people who want to talk about health care legislation.

When challenged or held accountable for acts of violence by their followers, talk hosts react predictably. They say that mere speech doesn't cause action and then claim piously and sanctimoniously to abhor violence out of one side of their mouth, while with the other they pour rhetorical gas on the flames they helped create. The pervasive advertising on all hate radio proves that speech drives action. If mere words and exhortations didn't create action no one would buy advertising on the programs. The ability of words to create action is the fundament of the hate radio business model and why its big mouths have multi-hundred million dollar contracts. Words motivate consumers to buy the products advertised during commercial breaks, just as their incendiary rants create and motivate political action between them. Hate rants are no more "entertainment" than ads. Moreover hate radio generically is really not entertainment; it is education and indoctrination.

#### Why is hate radio powerful?

While only 10% of Americans listen to it, hate radio is disproportionately powerful because to become a Republican candidate for congressman, senator or governor or any office in a November general election, one must first win the Republican primary election in February or March of that year. Only then, can someone compete as the official Republican candidate no matter how long they have already held the office. Alas, hate radio and TV listeners constitute a majority of those who show up to vote in Republican primaries.

Primary elections are usually very low turnout affairs and typically less than 10% of eligible republican voters ever bother to vote, often far less. In a recent Texas Senate primary only 3% showed up. So while only a minority of Americans regularly listens to hate radio, anyone who hopes to make a career in politics as a Republican is terrified of it. Since Republican incumbents worry far more about losing their seat to challengers from their right in Primary elections than to Democrats in general elections, Republican office holders and party officials are slavishly deferential to hate radio hosts who can discredit them with the specific Republican voters who can wreck their careers. Hate radio may rage against liberals and socialists, but their impact is on Republicans who compete in lightly attended Republican primaries where those voting trust hate

radio. For example when Senator Arlen Specter a Republican Senator from Pennsylvania changed to Democrat in 2009 he said it was because he could not win his next Republican primary, and he had served as a Republican Senator for 30 years.

### The vulnerability of “hate radio”

Hate radio is carried over the local airways, not over cable like much of TV. Since most hate radio originates locally it is only possible by local community financial support, so that is where it is uniquely vulnerable. Hate radio's financial foundation is the billions of advertising dollars flowing up from thousands of local advertisers who buy ads from local stations. Local ads from local banks, credit unions, auto dealers and other reputable merchants are the main reason station owners program this material; and without those advertisers it would disappear.

The physical footprint of each of America's 2000 hate radio stations is relatively small, usually 50 or so miles in diameter, so if you can listen to hate radio on your radio you live in a community where your merchants pay for advertising on those programs. Hate national radio is a kind of financial pyramid scheme where money flows in from thousands of local car dealers and local merchants to local stations that share their advertising minutes with national advertisers. It only reaches the airways in any area when a local station manager makes a decision that hate programming is the best way to attract local advertising dollars.

The best way to stop it is to persuade local advertisers that buying ads on these programs hurts rather than helps their business and thus destroy hate radio's business model.

Local advertising is the soft underbelly of hate radio because local merchants are sensitive to public opinion and react instantly when they think something they are doing is alienating potential customers.

When enough businesses cancel their advertising, local radio will be forced to change their programming to something else. Local advertisers hate controversy and will respond if they think that buying ads on these programs costs them business.

## II. A BOYCOTT STRATEGY – ACTION STEPS

If the Obama campaign taught us one thing it is that citizens want to become involved constructively in improving our country. A boycott is do-it-yourself democracy to take action against companies and stores that finance the ads that allow hate radio to exist and thrive. All hate radio is community and listener supported through patronage of businesses that buy time on their programs. Encourage your volunteers to regularly listen to hate radio so moderates can experience first hand what these programs are saying and doing. The largest problem you will face is the widespread ignorance of what is being said on these programs.

1. Get organized – do your research. Every campaign no matter how big or small begins by "opening a file." This is where you put all your research, contacts, scraps of information and material that will eventually become your campaign. Open a separate file on each station in your campaign.

2. Identify the radio stations Determine the AM and FM broadcasters in your area that carry these programs. Usually FM radio stations will carry for about 30–50 miles AM can be farther depending on terrain. The web has a lot of information about every station in America and its owner(s), ad rates, broadcast footprint etc. If you Google the call letters and town of any radio station you will turn up lots of information about it. Media's not shy; stations have abundant information about themselves on the web and often their own website with a map of their broadcast footprint. Wikipedia has an entry on most individual stations with links to FCC and other official websites with more information about the particular station. Most nationally syndicated programs have a finder where you can enter a zip code to find local outlets and often lists of stations that carry their program by state and city. But since hate radio is growing, sometimes you will miss new stations so also scan the dial on FM and AM to physically confirm all your hate radio broadcasters.

3. Form a small core group. Create a small group of people of from 5 to 10 in your local community. The natural organizing area for a radio boycotts is a physical area that includes the major towns in the geographic broadcast footprint of the station(s) you target.

Contact local churches, progressive organizations, farmers markets or places where people with common sense gather. Don't overlook moderate Republicans as they probably oppose hate radio more than progressives for how it has ruined the Republican Party and genuine conservatism. Don't publicly advertise preliminary meetings to explore the possibility of organizing a boycott. Make verbal invitations to friendly groups and people. If you publicly announce a meeting to organize against hate radio you will draw its supporters. You can run a campaign with a half dozen people who share your goals 100% but not with a group of 20 or 50 that has a few who don't. Organizing any campaign can only be done one-on-one, over the phone or across a kitchen table. Otherwise you attract people who will erode your momentum in endless ruminations. If your core group is not 110% against hate radio without equivocation or reservation, go start another one.

4. Monitor the programs – document. Begin monitoring hate radio programs and record them so you will have documentation for your quotes in your ads. Assign a volunteer or two to each program to take notes. Note the time of wildly egregious quotes so you can find them later.

5. Make a master list of advertisers. This is your target list and the heart of your campaign. Educate them until they drop their ads. When advertisers discontinue their ads, pass the word and tell your supporters to patronize them again. This is important, as you want to provide positive reinforcement for the behavior you seek to encourage.

6. Determine the newspapers in the broadcast area. This is where you will place your ads. Select one that has good coverage in the broadcast area. Find out the rate for half and full page ads. This cost will determine your initial budget goal, as you will need to be ready and able to place a large informational ad once you have gathered your research, and approached advertisers and reasoned with them to drop their ads and they refuse to do so. In that case you will have to run educational newspaper ads that inform the community what your merchants are financing.

7. Construct an ad. Prepare an ad listing the advertisers along with selected quotes from programs on which they advertised. The ad should exhort citizens not to patronize them and list company phone numbers for citizens to call and complain. Citizens should be exhorted in the ad to promise never to shop there again if the ads do not stop.

8. Take the proposed ad copy to the advertiser. Ideally when you present the company with your ad that explains what they have paid for and exhorting citizens not to buy their products this alone should persuade the company to stop its advertising without actually having to actually pay to run the ad.

9. If the newspaper will not run your ads you will have to mail out the information that would have gone in your ad. Given the economics of advertising, the cost for mailing out your information may well be similar to placing a large ad. A mailing list sympathetic to your campaign is easy to find. Contact a mailing list company for a file of progressive thinking people in your area. Possibly for a nominal fee the local County Democratic Party or the State Central committee can sell you a mailing list of highly motivated democratic voters, those who have voted in recent elections or "Motivated Ds." Order your list so that it combines duplicate addresses from the same address. So instead of getting two labels for Mr. and Mrs. Smith you can get one for Mr. and Mrs. Smith and save half your postage. Anyone who has worked in a political campaign will be familiar with how to obtain and use mailing lists.

If you have more than a couple of hundred pieces of mail you can get a bulk mail rate and the postage will be a small fraction of first class mail. You can employ a mailing company to set up these mailings for little more than the cost of the postage as they can get a cheaper rate than you can. But if you do a mass mailing, splash something prominently across the cover that explains what the letter is about because 90% of all non first class mail is simply glanced at for 5 seconds and then trashed unread. If you have enough volunteers, a better way to do a mass mailing is to personally hand address the envelopes (even if you have the labels) and place a first class stamp on the letter even though it will cost twice or more as much. This is because every hand-addressed piece of mail is opened and read. Have letter addressing parties. In every mailing ask for funds but more important gather names of people who support you.

10. If advertisers are state or federal agencies Contact your state or federal elected officials and complain about your tax money being used to promote the views of one political party. Even if your representatives are Republicans they should understand that you do not want public money used in a partisan way.

11. Create "Hate Radio Free Zone" stickers, bumper stickers and pins. All these things make for great fundraising tools and help get the message out.

### III. ORGANIZE A PHONE TREE

Create a phone tree and write a "calling script"

Recruit volunteers to call the station and advertisers to complain and stage the calls over time so you create endless intense pressure, endlessly applied. From the list of names you have been collecting from the very first meeting create a telephone tree with a telephone tree captain for each 10 people. The goal is to create a steady flow of calls and letters to advertisers. Coordinate these calls to be sure that people fulfill their assigned calls and that you get feedback from them and that feedback is shared with other telephone tree captains and the campaign leadership. Every boycott and every community is different and what works in one place will not necessarily work in another. Reviewing feedback from your calling volunteers allows you to adjust and improve your message and approach. Phone volunteers will tell you what works in the "real world" and are the earliest feedback as to whether your campaign is working. What telephone

volunteers tell you they hear is as important as what they are telling the advertisers. Provide positive reinforcement to them and be alert to any stress these calls may create.

A phone volunteer needs suggested talking points to cover. Emphasize they are to be courteous and not be drawn into arguments. Our goal is to educate not confront. These businesses are our neighbors and may well be unaware of what these programs are saying. They may well become defensive or angry. If a business becomes argumentative bring the call to a close. Phone calls to advertisers should politely but firmly inform the business of the caller's displeasure and disappointment and the less confrontational the call the better it is. If you send people to personally visit a businesses, send two people for moral support.

#### IV. FUNDRAISING

In your ads and mailings ask for people to give you their names and email addresses to collect a roster of people to find volunteers and fundraise. The very best place to find volunteers for any campaign is from existing volunteers. Anyone attracted to this campaign will probably know a half dozen other people who also would be interested. Contact them through your existing volunteers or use their names to introduce yourself when you call. If someone cold calls you and leads off with "Your friend Mary suggested I call you." you would never hang up out of concern that if you did it might appear to be rude to Mary.

At your first organizing meeting pass the hat and ask everyone for a donation to get people used to contributing and start a kitty. You can't stop hate radio without spending money and you are not asking for the donation for yourself, but to stop the hate radio pollution of in your community. Asking for money is a quick way to separate those with "big opinions" from those with "big commitment."

Find one or two people on your group to serve as fundraisers. Not everyone can do this. Fundraising should be done one-to-one in person or over the phone. When someone has responded to an ad or mailing follow up promptly by calling to ask if they want to volunteer time and/or money. But screen people who want to volunteer and use care before bringing totally unknown people into any campaign. (See Further reading.)

#### V. LEGAL

Find an attorney to volunteer to advise you to make sure you do not violate any laws about libel or slander and provide moral support to the whole effort. Ask around for good attorneys that support liberal causes, for example attorneys for legal clinics at universities or regional environmental groups and women's health centers. Your campaign will aggravate people and your actions will redirect the flow of advertising money so make sure you have legal support if for nothing else than peace of mind. If you run ad copy or send out a letter always have one attorney (or even two) review and approve it in advance to make sure it is carefully crafted to avoid any legal problems. Your attorney will also advise you if you need to make any reports in your state relative to fundraising and what the legal thresholds might be.

#### Further Reading

A great book on do it yourself publicity is *Getting the Word Out*, By Dick Beamish, Johns Hopkins press.

## **APPENDIX B: SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING**

The following essays develop many of the ideas in this guide.

1. **ACTIVISM/EDUCATION: A FALSE DICHOTOMY?** Which is the best strategy for doing environment activism? Education? Confrontation?

<http://www.britell.com/audubon/audubon4.html>

2. **IS ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION LESS DIVISIVE THAN ACTIVISM?** Audubon Chapters that prefer doing education rather than activism, because education is less controversial, are usually doing neither.

<http://britell.com/audubon/audubon6.html>

3. **THE DEVIL'S ENVIRONMENTAL DICTIONARY** Some uncommon definitions for common words and phrases. Also some laws, constants, and rules-of-thumb discovered over the years. <http://www.britell.com/devil/devil.html>

4. **WE MUST PETITION THE LORDS WITH PRAYER.** A "fill in the blanks" petition, in proper legal form, used in medieval times by subjects to "petition" lords. Useful when American citizens access to courts, judges, and all legal processes is suspended by congressional appropriation's "riders". <http://britell.com/misc/appeal.html>

5. **CONTROLLING "POINT SOURCE" INFORMATION POLLUTION** Environmental policy is increasingly based on half-baked, anecdotal, hard luck stories which must be countered.

<http://britell.com/use/use3.html>

6. **AN ORGANIZING GOAL FOR GRASSROOTS ACTIVISTS** Absent organizing, legislative panaceas are little more than contemporary versions of the children's crusades — a modest proposal. <http://britell.com/use/use8.html>

7. **PROBLEMS WITH CONSENSUS** Partnerships, roundtables and Quincy type groups are bad ideas that cannot resolve environmental conflicts. <http://www.britell.com/use/use10.html>

8. **STRAIGHT TALK ABOUT GRIDLOCK, CONSENSUS, "INTRUSIVE" GOVERNMENT, AND "WIN-WIN"** Three big myths about gridlock and the age old problem of consensus in deliberative bodies. <http://www.britell.com/use/use11.html>

9. **CONSENSUS, PARTNERSHIPS, AND ROUNDTABLES** Is it unimaginable to enforce federal laws upon the unwilling? The reasons for America's peculiar obsession with property rights. <http://britell.com/use/use11b.html>

10. **THE MYTH OF "WIN WIN"** While negotiation and consensus will always be a necessary part of the human experience, the mere presence of conflict does not mean that seeking "win-win" solutions is either the preferred or the appropriate approach.

<http://britell.com/use/use11c.html>

11. **NEGOTIATE TO WIN** Practical advice and checklists on conducting negotiations including: where to sit; what and when to eat; your rights to documents; and how to cope with stage fright. Pitfalls environmentalists face in negotiations. <http://www.britell.com/use/use12.html>

12. **MANAGEMENT PROBLEMS IN NON PROFITS** Many nonprofit and social change organizations manage to create work environments that are nightmares for their staffs. <http://britell.com/use/use13.html>

13. **IMPROVING MANAGEMENT IN NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS** Concrete (and sometimes unorthodox) suggestions to make any organization more efficient and a better place to work. <http://britell.com/use/use14.html>

14. **A PLAN TO REFORM EARTH DAY** Practical, hands-on projects suitable for community groups and students that will educate and motivate people to solve the most important environmental problems facing their communities, instead of just gumming them. <http://britell.com/use/use17.html>

15. **INDIAN WHALING, HISPANIC LOGGING & OTHER ACTIVIST DILEMMAS** Activists must oppose bad environmental projects (like the Makah whale hunt) even when promoted by or designed to financially benefit minorities, the oppressed, and disenfranchised. Paradoxically, not opposing them can lead to worse ethical failings than racism, colonialism, and the other "isms". <http://britell.com/use/use18.html>

16. **AVOIDING THE DARK SIDE OF EMAIL** Email is a powerful tool with unique advantages over speech and other forms of writing, but can cause problems not found in those other forms of communication. Many hints and suggestions for email's predictable yet avoidable problems including "flaming." Getting others to read and respond to your emails. <http://britell.com/use/use19.html>

17. **A CRITIQUE OF AMERICAN BIOLOGY** The decline in biological diversity is being caused by the timidity of American biologists. Some likely pitfalls in dealing with biologists and ecologists. <http://britell.com/use/use20.html>

18. **WHY DEMOCRATS LOSE ELECTIONS IN RURAL AREAS** George W. Bush refers to his victories in almost every rural county as the "big swath of red on the map." Why progressive candidates lose elections in rural areas and what can be done about it. A four part series. <http://britell.com/use/use22.html>

19. **THE PLOVER CAMPAIGN—ZONE DEFENSE (ZD)** How twenty national, state and local groups in rural Oregon pooled members and resources to create new organization to thwart an ATV threat in 2002 <http://britell.com/wild/zoneDefense.html>

20. **THE GOLDEN AGE OF GRASSROOTS WILDERNESS POLITICAL ORGANIZING** Today's wilderness activists are the fifth generation working to keep wild roadless places in their natural state. This essay abstracts the rules and lessons from successful and unsuccessful wilderness campaigns of the past. <http://britell.com/wild/BlackRiver.html>

## 21. WILDERNESS RULES: A RULE SET FOR GRASSROOTS WILDERNESS

CAMPAIGNS Today's wilderness activists are the fifth generation working to keep wild roadless places in their natural state. This essay abstracts the rules and lessons from successful and unsuccessful wilderness campaigns of the past. <http://britell.com/wild/campaignRules.html>

22.JONAH, PATRON SAINT OF GRASSROOTS ACTIVISTS Three thousand years ago grassroots organizers for the Jewish religion were called prophets, and Jonah was one of the best. His initial reluctance to accept a tough assignment and subsequent ambivalence about its overwhelming success make him an object lesson for organizers

<http://www.britell.com/misc/Jonah.html>

23.WHAT WOULD ALINSKY DO? (WWAD), or how NOT to run a grassroots campaign.

An Alinsky interview done just before he died. Campaigns can fall short when they abandon successful strategies from older campaigns, repeat approaches that failed in the past or employ stale, boring, and repetitive methods. Essential ideas found no where else in his writings.

<http://britell.com/alinsky.html>

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