



**PR 101 – Gaining Publicity for Your Chapter  
Provided by Colorado Trout Unlimited  
In coordination with**



In cooperation with Colorado Trout Unlimited, Xstatic Public Relations has developed the “Public Relations 101” kit to help chapters across the country publicize their news, events and other announcements. The kit is intended to provide you with many of the tools you’ll need to effectively communicate with the media and gain positive media coverage for your chapter.

With more than 400 chapters across the country – all of which are busy year-round with numerous activities – it’s important that all chapters use consistent messaging and materials when communicating with the media. Not only does this ensure strong, consistent branding for TU, it also helps members of the media fully understand the organization’s scope and diverse range of activities. Refer to this guide for simple step-by-step instructions when preparing to publicize a chapter event or announcement.

### **Key Messages**

Enclosed in this kit are TU’s organizational key messages – clear, concise messages about the organization, its mission, history and major events. Key messages should be used as appropriate in every communication piece that goes out to the media, ensuring that every chapter is communicating about the organization in the same way. Key messages should also be used during interviews with the media. They’re great to keep in front of you for phone interviews, or to review just before an in-person interview.

Key messages are most helpful when:

- Drafting press releases, media advisories, or other media materials.
- Developing presentations, newsletters, brochures, or other collateral materials.
- Talking with members of the media.
- Discussing TU with the general public or prospective members.

### **Press Releases**

Press releases are the most common tool for communicating news or events to members of the media. Releases are intended to provide a basic summary of a potential news story, why it is important to readers/viewers/listeners, and who to contact for more information. Members of the media have very hectic schedules and receive hundreds of press releases every day, so it’s important that press releases are interesting, brief and complete. We suggest keeping press releases to ONE PAGE ONLY. Remember, the purpose of a press release is to interest reporters into following up for an interview, doing research of their own and writing a story.

Questions? Concerns? Comments? Please contact TU National’s Volunteer Operations Department.  
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Press releases can be used for a variety of reasons, but to maximize media coverage, be sure that your announcement is newsworthy. Typically, information is newsworthy if it:

- Is timely.
- Is new and relevant to the lives of readers/viewers/listeners.
- Is taking place locally or affects your immediate community.
- Affects a large number of people.
- Presents conflict or debate.
- Is unique or unusual (i.e. “Dog Bites Man” vs. “Man Bites Dog”)

Some common reasons to draft and distribute a press release include:

- Chapter events that are open to the community.
- Personnel changes or additions.
- Partnerships with other community organizations.
- Award announcements.
- Special programs, classes, presentations or speaking opportunities.
- Scholarship or award opportunities and contests.
- Redesigned or newly launched Web site.

Now that you know what is newsworthy and when to issue a press release, it’s important to know what to include in your announcement. Press releases should be brief and clearly written in the “inverted pyramid” format – this simply means that the most important information should go first and the less-crucial information should follow. All press releases should include the following six key elements (see the press release template for formatting):

- **Headline** – Most important information: what is the press release about?
- **Subhead** – Secondary information; can be used to elaborate.
- **Dateline** – City the news is originating from and date the release is issued.
- **Lead** – The opening sentence of the press release containing the most important information.
- **Body** – The paragraphs following the lead that include supporting information.
- **Boilerplate** – The standard “About TU” summary included on all media materials.

In addition to these six elements, be sure to include your contact information so the reporter knows who to contact with questions or to schedule an interview.

### **Media Advisories**

Media advisories are another great tool for communicating with the media. Most often, media advisories are used in cooperation with press releases to remind members of the media about a special event or photo opportunity. When the press release was distributed a week or two in advance of the event, media advisories can be sent out the day before or the day of an event to ensure it’s on the media’ calendar.

Media advisories should be limited to **ONE PAGE ONLY** and should communicate the basic who, what, when, where and why of an event. Please see the media advisory template for formatting.

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## **Media Distribution**

The way you distribute your information to the media is just as important as what you distribute to them. A few things to consider before sending your press release:

- **Contacts** – Press releases and media advisories should be sent to the most appropriate person at the media outlet. For daily newspapers, find the reporter who covers the beat that your story best fits into. Depending on the story, it might be the outdoor/environmental, features, events/calendar or business reporter. For smaller community newspapers, announcements should be sent to the editor or community news reporter.

For broadcast media outlets, send announcements to the person who oversees the newscast or radio show. For television, it's usually best to send news to the assignment editor, producer or news director. For radio, the producer or news director is the most appropriate. You can find names and contact information for these individuals in the publication or on the media outlet's Web site.

Create a list of current media contacts for your chapter. Keep in mind that reporters change beats fairly often, so be sure to update your list regularly for the best results.

- **Customized** – Reporters appreciate when news is customized to their specific beat, outlet and target audience. When distributing announcements to the media, try to customize the information as much as possible by including a personalized "pitch letter" as an introduction. The pitch letter should be short and succinct and should include a personalized greeting and a short explanation of why the information is important to their readers, viewers or listeners.

Reporters typically prefer to receive press releases or media advisories by e-mail or fax. When e-mailing announcements, avoid attachments and paste the information directly into the body of the e-mail. For faxes, include your pitch letter on the cover page with the announcement following.

## **Media Follow Up Calls**

Following up directly with reporters after you distribute a press announcement is one of the best ways to ensure media coverage. Follow-up calls allow you to make sure reporters have received the information, find out if they intend to use it, or if they need additional information.

Most often, members of the media prefer to be contacted in the morning when it's less likely that they are on deadline. However, this may be different for specific television or radio contacts, depending on what time their particular show airs. When you reach a reporter live on the phone, you should first identify yourself and state that you are calling on behalf of your chapter or council. Next, ask the contact if this is a good time to talk. If so, proceed by letting them know why you are calling. You might say, "I'm calling to check in on some information I sent your way last week about CTU's annual statewide river cleanup," or "I'm calling to find out your interest in covering a local conservation project that CTU is leading."

Keep your calls short and to the point, and always follow up with requested information in a timely manner. Be respectful of the reporters' time and deadlines, and you will establish yourself as a credible, trustworthy media source for future stories about Trout Unlimited in your local area.

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