

Focus Group Guide – Industry

Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program
Strategic Communications Plan
DJ Case & Associates

FINAL DRAFT: November 28, 2018

Thank you all for being here. I'm Phil Seng, I work at DJ Case and Associates. We work with state and federal agencies and nonprofits all over the country on conservation-related research and communications.

For this project, we're working with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Programs to discover how we can keep people in your industry informed about its activities and accomplishments.

Two quick things you should know:

1. I want to assure you that we are not here to persuade you of anything or to sell you anything. We just want your honest opinions.
2. We are recording this session. That's simply for notetaking purposes. No one outside of the team assigned to this research process will be able to link a specific individual with a specific quote or response.

We'll start the focus group in a moment, but before we get started, I need to read you a couple of statements.

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: We are collecting this information subject to the Paperwork Reduction Act (44 U.S.C. 3501) to seek comments from key industry partners to achieve greater awareness and understanding of WSFR and to validate messages and strategies in the WSFR communication plan. Your response is voluntary and we will not share your response publicly. We may not conduct or sponsor and you are not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB Control Number. OMB has reviewed and approved this survey and assigned OMB Control Number 1090-0011.

Estimated Burden Statement: We estimate it will take 20 minutes per respondent (per each of 5 focus group sessions) to participate in this focus group, including time to read instructions and gather information. You may submit comments on any aspect of this information collection to the Information Collection Clearance Officer, Madonna L. Baucum, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (BPHC-PPM), 5275 Leesburg Pike, MS: BPHC Falls Church, VA 22041-3803.

Introductions

Tonight, we will be discussing a variety of topics and asking you questions about them. For some of our questions we will go around the table and ask every one of you to answer. Other times, we will just ask for general comments. I apologize in advance if I have to cut anyone off or move past a topic before you've had a chance to fully discuss it, but we have a lot of ground to cover in a short amount of time.

Before we get started, does anyone have any questions?

To start, let's do quick introductions. Can you tell us your name, the company you work for, and what you do there?

That's great, thanks.

Brand & Conservation

Goal: To discover how the participants feel an association with conservation would impact a brand.

We want to start out with a broad set of questions about your company's brand and what your company wants to be known for. Take a moment and think about that.

1) When you hear the word "conservation," what does that mean to you?

Facilitator note: The hope is that the participants will now respond with their definition of "conservation" and some examples of what that means to them. If they don't here's a list of phrases to prompt them, if needed:

What about ()?

- Clean air and water*
- Leaving the natural world better than we found it*
- Healthy populations of fish and wildlife*
- The largest possible populations of fish and wildlife*
- Hunting and fishing*
- Heritage*

Now think about your company's brand:

2) How does associating your brand with conservation strengthen your brand or add value to your company/industry?

3) How does promoting your company's contribution to conservation strengthen your brand or add value to your company/industry?

4) When you talk about “conservation” in association with your company’s brand, what are the topics you like to highlight?

We all know your company contributes to conservation by paying your excise tax.

5) Do you feel people appreciate your company’s contribution? If so, who? How do you know your contribution is appreciated?

6) Do you or your company even *want* to feel appreciated or recognized for your contribution of the excise tax? Why or why not?

Facilitator note:

(only if needed) Would you be interested in partnering with the Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program to celebrate your contribution to conservation?

(only if needed) How could the Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program help you celebrate your contribution to conservation via the excise tax?

Understanding of the Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program

Goal: Determine what the participants know and feel about the Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program.

Let's switch gears. As I mentioned earlier, we're working with the Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program. We want to get a sense of how *you* describe the program—what words or phrases or ideas you use.

1) If you wanted to describe the Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program, what words or phrases or ideas would you use? How would you describe the program to others in your organization?

3) What do you call the Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program when you refer to it in your organization or when talking to peers in a trade organization?

2) How do you see your company's relationship with the Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program—as a partnership? A contribution? Is it simply like paying any other tax or something different?

5) Now I'd like you to look at a couple paragraphs the Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program uses to describe itself.

Facilitator Note: Handout Introduction to Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program

Circle the words or phrases that resonate with you—that is, what makes you feel positively about the Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program. Cross out words or phrases that make you feel negatively about the program.

Facilitator Note: Give them a few minutes to read. Watch for them to finish.

Would a couple of people like to share what you circled and crossed out?

Fish & Wildlife Populations

Goal: To discover if the participants' interest in wildlife and wild places extends beyond issues that might impact the sale and use of the products they manufacture.

One of the purposes for this focus group is to figure out how to better articulate the value and benefit of Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration grant funding. The next set of questions will help us learn more about the topics that are interesting and/or important to you.

1) **Management Only:** What particular species or types of species are you the most interested in hearing about? Why are those particular species of interest to you?

1) **Communicators Only:** What particular species or types of species are your customers the most interested in? Why are those particular species of interest to them?

2) **Management Only:** Would you rather hear about broad efforts that might impact several species or more concentrated efforts that impact a single species?

2) **Communicators Only:** Are you more likely to share stories with your customers about broad efforts that might impact several species or more concentrated efforts that impact a single species?

3) **Management Only:** Assuming that hearing about a conservation effort directly related to the use of your product is very important to you, how would you rate the importance of each of these stories?

3) **Communicators Only:** Assuming that sharing stories about a conservation effort directly related to the use of your product is very important to you, how would you rate the importance of sharing each of these stories?

Show of hands (Important, Somewhat Important, or Not Important?)

- Broad conservation effort (this could be the restoration of a wetland or a prairie)
- An issue of extreme environmental importance (the decline in pollinators)
- An important non-game species (like protecting sea turtle nesting areas)
- An issue of particular importance in your part of the country (for instance feral hogs in the south or Asian carp in the Great Lakes)

4) **Management Only:** What are some of the ways we can talk about the Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program's broader benefits to fish and wildlife populations that would interest people in your company and industry?

4) **Communicators Only:** What are some of the ways we can talk about the Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program's broader benefits to fish and wildlife populations that would be of interest to your customers?

Land Acquisition and Access

Goal: To discover if public land acquisition is a hot button for participants.

Another area we want to know more about is how you feel about the acquisition of and/or access to land for recreation. Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration grants to state agencies provide recreational access on more than 464 million acres of land, 167 million acres of fresh water, as well as coastal waters to people across the US.

1) **Management Only:** Do these sorts of stories or facts about land acquisition and access for recreational and/or conservation purposes resonate with people in your company and industry? Why or why not?

1) **Communicators Only:** Do these sorts of stories or facts about land acquisition and access for recreational and/or conservation purposes resonate with your audience? Why or why not?

Probe if needed: Do you think they would be pleased to hear about land that was purchased for a new hunting area or a new boat ramp becoming available to the public?

Story Testing

Goal: To discover the subject matter, length and format that would be best received by participants if the Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program were to send them periodic updates.

Facilitator Note: The example story handouts are labeled 1A, 1B, 2A etcetera. The number indicates the order in which the stories should be discussed. The letter indicates the order in which the different versions of each story should be discussed in.

The stories are also labeled as to which industry focus group they are for:

- *Hunting/Shooting- Group A*
- *Fishing/Boating- Group B*
- *Communications -Group C*

Discuss as many stories as possible in the time allotted.

Don't start a new story if there is less than 30 minutes left of the focus group.

Now let's switch gears and ask you to take a look at a few example stories. Here's the first one. (hand out story and give a few minutes to read) ...

Group X Story 1A: Example Story – Long Format

1) What do you think of this story?

2) What do you think of the subject matter?

3) **Management Only:** Would you like to receive a story like this from the Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program to keep you up to date on the Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program's activity? Why?

3) **Communicators Only:** Would you be likely to share a story like this from the Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program with your audience?

4) **Management Only:** After reading this story, do you believe that this is an example of wise use of your excise tax money?

Here are two more stories on the same or a similar topic. (Handout versions Group X Story 1B & Group X Story 1C of the story)

Group X Story 1B: Example Story – Medium Length Format

5) How do you feel about this story?

Group X Story 1C: Example Story – Brief Format

6) How do you feel about this story?

Remember, don't start a new story if there is less than 30 minutes left of the focus group. After all stories are shared and discussed ask the following:

7) **Management Only:** Show of hands, which of these story formats would you most like to receive from the Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program?

- The longer more involved stories?
- The medium length?
- The quick facts?

7) **Communicators Only:** Show of hands, which of these story formats would you be most like to share with your audiences?

- The longer more involved stories?
- The medium length?
- The quick facts?

8) What would be the best way for the Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program to get stories like these to you?

Facilitator Note: might need a prompt here (email? what other things are you thinking?)

Story Pitch Email – Communicators Only:

The last example I have to share with you is more of a pitch than a story. Take a look at this example email then we'll talk a little more.

Facilitator's Note: Hand out pitch email (be sure you have fishing or hunting version according to audience)

Facilitator's Note: Pause

This is an example of an email that would be sent to a handful of manufacturers regarding an actual conservation effort. The companies then have the opportunity to send a team to the event and develop their own conservation related content.

9) Would you be interested in being approached with opportunities like this where you could send you own writers, photographers and/or videographers and develop your own content?

10) If you were going to participate in an event like that would you feel the need for exclusivity or would you be willing to be part of a media event where several companies got to take part in an experience and develop their own spin on the story?

Wrap up

Goal: To determine if the discussion impacted their understanding and opinion of the Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program.

A couple more questions before you go. Earlier tonight, I asked about your company's relationship with the Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program. Now that you've heard a lot about the program...

1) Did how you think about the Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program change?

2) How do you see your company's relationship with the Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program now?

- As a Partner?
- Contributor?
- Supporter?

Now that we've talked about the Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program for almost 90 minutes, are there any new words you feel describe the program?

Those are all the questions I have for you. Any final thoughts, or additional things you'd like to add?

Thank you, everyone! I know you are busy, and we appreciate your taking the time to chat with us tonight.