# NWF Advocacy and Organizing Guidance during COVID19

## **Messaging Guidance**

In general, over the next several weeks, NWF recommends keeping activities and messages framed in a positive light – focusing on providing a sense of community to fellow activists during this time of uncertainty. Whenever possible, focus on education, solutions, and community spirit. The goal during this period is to provide content and engagement opportunities for our community while being respectful of the ongoing health crisis. Please continue to be strategic and thoughtful as to what message frames you are using during this uncertain time.

Exceptions may be warranted when responding to specific federal actions such as the Administration’s restrictions on the use of science in decision making, pullback of enforcement of environmental regulations, and their finalization of the cars rule as well as energy related-legislative actions, energy provisions in stimulus packages, or other current events.

## **Tactics Ideas & Potential Activities**

### Content Creation

As community centers, entertainment outlets, and other public spaces remain closed, people will no doubt be looking for alternative activities to participate in and content to consume. By creating content and materials that can be shared online, organizers can help fill that gap while ensuring conservation remains part of the conversation. Content should focus on educating the audience on conservation, climate change, and wildlife issues. We recommend keeping a positive message frame – to give viewers a welcome distraction – and whenever possible, try to make the content “evergreen”.

Target Audiences: Parents, the general public, students

#### *Kids Activities and Education Resources*

With schools and childcare centers closed, many parents are looking for ways to keep their kids entertained, educated, and connected to nature over the next several weeks. NWF’s Education team is creating a huge volume of resources for parents, teachers, and students to download with activities related to educating kids about climate change and conservation, and other fun resources. Affiliates and organizers can share these resources with their networks. Potential components could include:

* Conservation themed word puzzles/searches
* Conservation/Earth Day themed coloring pages
* Reading lists/book recommendations and discussion questions
* Vocabulary worksheets
* Instructions for energy science experiments

In addition to sending to your email networks and posting on your social media channels, organizers should consider asking grasstops to post on their sites, as well as coordinating with contacts at local schools to share with teachers. Local media may be interested in a human interest story on how parents are handling this crisis at home. Additionally, organizers could encourage parents to post/send in pictures of their children’s completed pages in response.

If you need inspiration for worksheets/content here are a few resources (be sure to give credit if using their free content):

* <https://www.scholastic.com/parents/kids-activities-and-printables.html>
* <http://www.sciencefun.org/kidszone/experiments/>
* <https://www.greatschools.org/gk/worksheets/>
* <http://puzzlemaker.discoveryeducation.com/>
* <https://rangerrick.org/magazines/ranger-rick/classroom-resources/>
* <https://rangerrick.org/crafts-activities/>
* <https://www.nwf.org/Eco-Schools-USA/Resources/Activities>
* [https://www.nwf.org/Eco-Schools-USA/Resources/Curriculum](https://www.nwf.org/Eco-Schools-USA/Resources/Curriculum/Climate-Change)
* <https://blog.nwf.org/2020/03/the-national-wildlife-federation-helping-families-through-the-covid-19-outbreak/>

#### *Backyard Gardening*

As people are looking for opportunities to get outside and stay connected to nature, many are using this time to focus on their gardening! This is an opportunity for NWF to provide people with resources and tips for wildlife and climate friendly gardening that will improve their mental health and protect the planet. Resources may be shared online via social media or through email sends. Organizers can also invite their grasstops or partners to post through their networks and share these resources. Local media may be interested in a story covering how people are using this time to garden in their backyards.

Resources:

* <https://blog.nwf.org/2020/03/6-actions-to-combat-climate-change-and-help-wildlife-in-your-garden/>
* <https://blog.nwf.org/2020/03/de-stress-while-helping-wildlife/>

[\*Climate Team Concept Memo: *Climate and Gardening Kits for Kids and Parents*](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1QB8zOhKUZ86NL3eTjRuNmns73dQQ3SJTsh8h9l_LgJA/edit?usp=sharing)

#### *Wildlife Trivia Social Media*

Telework and social distancing mean “screen time” is up for many people across the country. So why not give them something a little lighter – but still educational – to engage with than just COVID-19 updates? Organizers can create daily trivia questions or quizzes on your social media sites. Posts with the answers should link to pages with more information on the topic.

Supplemental Resources:

* Climate Change Index (climateindex.org)
* <https://blog.nwf.org/2016/12/our-favorite-wildlife-quizzes-of-2016/>

#### *Videos and Virtual Hang Outs*

Just because our work is temporarily moving online, doesn’t mean we can’t still be social! Organizers can create video content, host live streams, or host virtual social events to help maintain a sense of community and personal connection while practicing social distancing. Potential ideas include:

* Have a grasstop scientist or outdoor rec specialist record/live stream a hike or other outdoor activity while discussing conservation issues
* Have a master gardener or someone from NWF’s gardening team live stream their wildlife friendly garden
* Film a video tour of your climate-resilient landscaping or home’s clean energy/energy efficiency features and link to resources for viewers looking to do the same
* Host an online “happy hour” and invite grasstops to give virtual speeches to attendees. (Can also be a “coffee” hour.)
* Have a grasstop professor or scientist record a short lesson on wildlife, water, lands, climate change or other issues that can be shared on social media sites.
* Host an online film screening where participants can view the same film and comment in a chat box and/or share the film in advance and host a post-viewing discussion.
	+ <http://coldwaters.org/>
	+ <https://dceff.org/watchnow/>
* Host a book club to discuss a conservation or environmental book online or through a conference call.

### Activist Training & Network Development

In the digital era, entire movements can be organized without the organizers ever being in the same room. The international youth climate movement became tour de force utilizing webinars, conference calls, and social media. During times of uncertainty, activist groups and organizations look to trusted institutions for guidance on how to creatively engage their membership and retain participation on their issues. Following the example of the youth, the greater conservation and environmental community can utilize the same tactics to maintain and build communities and train new or veteran activists for action on the ground and online.

Target Audiences: Grassroots activists, newly engaged network members, grasstops

#### *Activist Check-Ins:*

Spend time checking in with your activists - you don’t need an “ask,” you can just check-in and see how folks are doing. Is everyone healthy? Do they need someone to talk to for a few minutes? This type of ask-free outreach to connect with our community gets to the heart of organizing - building a meaningful, human connection with like-minded individuals.

* Phone bank high-level activists or major donors to see how they are
* Use social media to connect with your broader community

#### *Digital Organizing Workshop*

Social media management requires specific knowledge of digital tactics and strategies to build and maintain a digital presence. Utilizing the expertise of your organization’s social media manager, build a branded digital training module that can be shared in a digital organizing toolkit. Potential tactics could include:

* Host a live digital organizing tactics webinar. Record the webinar and include it in a toolkit on your organization’s website
* Share the recorded webinar via email or on social media networks
* Try to land a wide audience for participation.

#### *Op-ed/LTE Writing Workshop*

Communication managers spend a lot of time developing messaging and content that will resonate amidst a sea of continually flowing information. Utilize your communications director or manager to host an online writing workshop and include it in a digital organizing toolkit. Potential tactics could include:

* Host a live op-ed/LTE writing workshop. Record the webinar and include it in a toolkit on your organization’s website
* Provide an example op-ed and explain how to structure a piece
* Provide best practices on successfully placing an op-ed or LTE
* Offer to help activists pen an op-ed or LTE in their voice and make suggestions on where they will have the best success of the placement.

#### *201 Activist Training*

High profile activists are a big draw for people who are already highly involved in issue-based communities. Tap into your network to find veteran activists or celebrities who can inspire other veteran activists. Veteran activists will be able to share stories and best practices for tactics that can be utilized on the ground and online.

#### *Surround Sound Tactic - Build Online Communities*

Online communities are places where people can share and request information, both locally and nationally. A few tips for creating one are:

* Create moderated online communities using platforms such as Facebook or Reddit
* Create a Google group where lengthier pieces of information can be shared. People can adjust the amount of information they want to receive, which can decrease the number of opt-outs you receive
* Experiment with different social media platforms to see where the most engagement occurs and put more effort into high performing areas.

### Educational & Discussion Events

While these are challenging times, especially to organize in, there is an opportunity to educate a captive audience that is seeking ways to engage in conservation. Create educational materials, events, and discussions to activate this group to advocate for our message and work with potential future activists. Including elected officials and other grasstop leaders when possible, is an added way to enhance the value of these programs and will help build a base of speakers and leaders to engage in the future. For events with elected officials, keep the discussions focused on issue education.

Key Voices: local, state, and federally elected officials, issue experts, thought leaders, activists.

#### *Online Thought Leader Forums/Roundtables*

Organize online forums and/or roundtables (via webinar, Twitter, Facebook Live, etc.) utilizing existing relationships with issue experts in your community and network. Invite your larger network and reporters to discuss how your communities are still engaged in the fight for wildlife, conservation funding, or climate action, and the local solutions that are currently being implemented. **Use this opportunity to lift-up a diverse set of voices and expand your base of support to highlight how these challenges are disproportionately impacting minority communities.** Invite target(s) to participate in these webinars as appropriate (for the purposes of general issue education).

Activities:

* Environmental Justice Virtual Roundtable: Organize an online forum and/or roundtable with issue experts in your community and network to amplify the voices of environmental justice leaders and public health experts on the unique challenges being faced by people of color and the recommended solutions that individuals and the government should be implementing to better serve these communities during this crisis. Invite your larger network and reporters to ask questions and hear from leaders. \*[Climate Concept Memo: Virtual Environmental Justice Roundtable & Media Outreach](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1QfiTJrU33OpG2aB4rteoAzExPYhyOn3oH3qRAjFLGvE/edit?usp=sharing)\*
	+ [OpEd from Mustafa Santiago-Ali](https://www.usnews.com/news/healthiest-communities/articles/2020-03-17/ring-the-alarm-for-communities-vulnerable-to-coronavirus)
* Pitch follow-up stories or interviews to reporters that attended the virtual event
* Op-ed focused on the topic(s) or local solutions discussed
* Conduct one-on-one follow-ups with attendees to increase the network that can be utilized when in-person activities can resume.

#### *Issue Specific Webinars or Teleconferences*

In the current environment, people may be hungry for information that’s not regularly being covered on the news. Use this opportunity to educate the public and/or decision makers on issues we usually organize around i.e. conservation funding, public lands, clean water, clean energy, climate action, clean air, etc. Invite target(s) to participate in these webinars/teleconferences as appropriate.

Supplementary Activities:

* Pitch follow-up stories or interviews to reporters that attended the virtual event
* Ask target(s) to write a follow-up op-ed on the topic
* Conduct one-on-one follow-ups with attendees to increase network that can be utilized when in-person activities can resume
* If applicable, follow-up with target(s) to continue relationship-building with their office.

#### *Tele-townhalls w/elected officials*

\*For this tactic, please confer with your organization leaders to ensure we’re being sensitive and mindful of electeds commitments to more pressing matters.

Engage target(s) and ask them to participate in a conservation-focused tele-townhall. The discussion should focus on general conservation, wildlife, or climate education and not specific legislative asks. Organize this event in the same way you’d organize an in-person townhall i.e., invite the press, invite grasstops, collect names of participants.

Supplementary Activities:

* Pitch follow-up stories or interviews to reporters that attended the tele-townhall
* Push out online petitions and action alerts to participants of the event
* Ask target(s) to write a follow-up op-ed on the importance of conservation.

### Virtual “Turnout” Events

April is typically a busy month for in-person actions across the environmental community – including rallies, festivals, tabling opportunities, and other high turnout events. However, given the current ban on in-person events, school closures, and people working from home due to COVID-19, these activities have now rightfully been postponed or canceled. While these events will not take place as initially intended, there is the opportunity to reinvent them in the digital space by utilizing online organizing tools. These virtual events will provide individuals who may be feeling isolated the chance to connect with a larger community and take collective action on issues of importance to them. Webinar platforms, YouTube live streams, and Facebook Live are all potential venues for virtual events.

Target Audiences: General public, students, youth, elected officials

#### *Virtual Rallies or Festivals*

If you had already been working to plan large-scale April events, think about opportunities to pivot into virtual events by live-streaming online gatherings or rallies. You could also have individuals take pictures with a sign, then create an image of a rally that pieces together all of those activist images to send a powerful message. NWF can support this by offering a suite of digital tools to help organize and host events as needed.

#### *Earth Day Radio Show/Podcast*

Work with a local media outlet to call in and “take over” or co-host a radio show or podcast program around Earth Day, focusing the conversation on the importance of climate action or clean energy. Organizers can either participate themselves or recruit grasstop participants. For radio shows, speakers can encourage listeners to call in with conservation or wildlife questions or to tell their own stories. Podcast hosts can ask listeners to submit their questions in advance and post their stories on the show’s social media sites or other feedback platforms. Radio shows are an excellent option for areas with limited broadband access, as they do not require an internet connection for participation.

Supplementary Activities:

* Pitch follow-up stories or interviews with reporters that attended the virtual event
* Push out online petitions and action alerts to participants
* Utilize email, remote phone banks, and peer-to-peer texting apps to recruit attendees
* Ask NWF targets and grasstops to write follow-up op-eds
* Where applicable, follow-up with targets via phone or email to continue to build relationships with those offices.

### Media Education & Outreach

We recognize that the uncertainty surrounding COVID-19 requires adjustment to our coalition’s upcoming field work.

Key Voices: organization members and leaders, issue experts, thought leaders, activists

#### *Reporter 1:1s*

Reach out to a reporter on background regarding timely wildlife conservation-related federal issues (i.e., Recovering America’s Wildlife Act, the Administration’s dismissal of science, ways the country/state/city can transition to a clean energy economy, environmental justice, etc.). Share message guidance and set up a follow up to see if the reporter has any questions on the material. Try to connect with a media outlet in one of our targeted districts to build a relationship for further media inquiries. Another possibility is reaching out to a local news channel to see if a video interview can be set up from an activists or issue expert’s home.

Potential Surround Sound Activities:

* Pitch follow-up stories or interviews with reporters that attended virtual events on the topic
* Submit an Op-ed focused on Recovering or science denial or whatever topic you do background on
* Collect online petitions to the Administration on the importance of listening to science.

#### *Set Up a Skype/Phone Interview with a Radio Show*

In this time of virtual gatherings, radio programs are still looking for guests on their recurring shows. Reach out to a local radio show to see if you can organize a Skype/phone conversation with a local spokesperson on one of our critical issues.

Supplementary Activities:

* Pitch follow-up stories or interviews to reporters that listened to the radio show
* Utilize social media to highlight the radio show hit
* Ask participant(s) to write a follow-up op-ed on conservation funding, public lands, clean water, or the need for climate action.

#### *Human-Interest Stories with Activists during Covid-19*

Reach out to a reporter to pitch a personal story of an activist and how they are handling our new reality and reinventing how we organize in this environment. Offer guidance on how to stay stress-free during this uncertain time.

Supplementary Activities:

* Pitch follow-up stories or interviews to reporters on the human-interest story
* Utilize social media to highlight the personal story
* Ask participant(s) to write a follow-up op-ed.

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