

# Strengthening Public Affairs in the Northeastern Area

USDA Forest Service  
Northeastern Area  
State and Private Forestry



**Description:** The Northeastern Area has initiated an effort to strengthen its public affairs function. To accomplish this task, the Area has chartered a team of NA public affairs staff. The team has been given short term and long term assignments.

## Key Issues:

- A stronger, more coordinated public affairs effort will help the Area more effectively achieve the Agency's mission.
- As a result of this effort, the Area public affairs staff will be focused, coordinated, and better engage with the broader Agency-wide public affairs community.
- This effort will result in all NA employees understanding their role in ensuring a stronger public affairs function within the organization.

## Accomplishments:

- A draft set of key messages has been created and are being vetted and refined by the NA executive team.
- An Area-wide key contacts database is being created. A database has been selected and now is being populated with contacts. The database will be web-based, searchable, and used for a variety of purposes.
- A list of NA topics for a Washington Office seminar series has been developed, and will be prioritized and then submitted by the Area Director to the Washington Office this winter.
- An environment is being created where public affairs specialists throughout the Area work as a team to leverage and share expertise.
- Key media outlets have been identified and individual public affairs specialists have been assigned to begin to build or maintain relationships with reporters and news professionals.
- An operations manual, or protocol manual, is being developed that will describe in detail the process to follow on a wide range of public relations/partner relations issues. This will provide consistency and reduce confusion.

## Future Direction:

- A stronger public affairs function will position the Area to better deliver its programs, engage its partners, and increase the awareness and understanding of the significant forest resource in the Northeast. It will help all NA employees understand their role in achieving the Area's mission of promoting sustainable forest management.
- A more cohesive public affairs team will provide proactive advice and counsel to help guide and implement future work, such as congressional and partner relations and evaluation of communication products.

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