



Audubon

CHAPTER
CONSERVATION
COMMITTEE GUIDE

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CHAPTER CONSERVATION COMMITTEE GUIDE

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INTRODUCTION

Audubon chapters have formed all across the country for the purpose of conserving wildlife, wildlife habitat and our natural resources. It is the charge of the Conservation Committee to take the lead in planning and directing the environmental activities of each chapter.

OBJECTIVES

- Identify, study, and evaluate environmental problems and opportunities and select priorities for action.
- Inform members about conservation issues and projects and encourage them to act individually and in cooperation with other members.
- Represent the chapter's views by meeting with officials, speaking at hearings and other forums and submitting written comments when appropriate.
- Educate the general public about conservation matters and urge them to act on priority issues.

COMMITTEE MIX

The size of your Conservation Committee will be influenced by the size of your chapter and will depend on your starting point. If you already have a functioning committee, you may decide to enlarge it. But if you are starting from scratch, your challenge will be to get a committee (vs. a one-person show) going. Some chapters have found that by starting small they are able to establish a strong base and grow from there. Working with a group of three to five, you can begin to affect conservation issues, publicize your successes, and then attract others.

The following suggestions may help you decide how to involve more people in your committee and determine which activities you should engage in.

At a minimum, consider working on one local and one national matter. You'll want one or two people to be (or become) the expert on each matter, and another two to three people to take the lead in mobilizing member and citizen action. The chair will conduct meetings, coordinate the committee's activities, and speak on its behalf. A recorder should keep a written account of committee decisions and actions. It is important to forward written summaries of your meetings to your board and absent committee members so everyone is kept informed.

There are several good places to look for committee members if your chapter doesn't already have such a committee or if you'd like to enlarge your committee.

1. Your state office can provide you with the names of Action Alert subscribers in your chapter territory. These activists have asked our Washington DC staff to notify them whenever a letter to their Representative or Senator is needed on a national environmental issue.
2. From time to time our national headquarters does surveys and other mailings on conservation issues. The names and addresses of respondents who have indicated an interest in working on environmental issues are also available from our Washington DC office.
3. If your membership committee sends interest surveys to new members, make it a point to recruit anyone who indicates an interest in conservation issues.
4. Always welcome newcomers through announcements at chapter programs and in your newsletter. Make it easy for them to contact you. And, remember that the best way to get someone involved is to *ask* them.
5. If your chapter has a Web site, post a message asking for help. Give phone numbers and email addresses of chapter leaders for them to contact. Describe briefly how much time you expect participation will take and stress that everyone can contribute – no experience required!

SELECTING PRIORITIES

Focus your efforts on a few issues so you'll have a greater chance of influencing their outcome. Working on all the issues dilutes your efforts. Let committee members, with the Board's approval, select the committee's priorities so they'll have a stake in working on them.

Locally, you may choose to work with elected officials to save a natural area from development, cooperate with city or county staffs to support implementation of existing environmental protection laws, or work directly with private individuals or businesses on a matter of joint interest. Many chapters have gained good publicity and great satisfaction from local conservation projects like sprucing up a nature preserve once or twice a year, building trails and/or bird blinds to make a previously inaccessible area available for educational groups, re-vegetating an area with native species, or educating adults regarding the proper use and disposal of pesticides and other toxic household chemicals.

Decisions made at the state level have become increasingly important in the last few years. So, you may also wish to devote time and effort to laws that are passed by your state legislators or implemented by state agencies. Chapters have played a major role in passing and supporting state income tax check-offs that fund non-game wildlife programs. And, more and more state agencies are taking over the responsibility for implementing federal programs that monitor environmental quality, control pollution, and conserve our soils and

wetlands. If your state has an Audubon Council or an environmental coalition, you can learn about the issues and coordinate your action with these groups. Your state office will also be able to help.

The success of major national campaigns, like the decades-long campaign to preserve the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge or efforts to keep a strong Endangered Species Act, hinges on the actions of Conservation Committees and Audubon members nationwide. Your state office staff or the Audubon Policy office in Washington, DC can advise you regarding the status of national issues and suggest how you can be most effective in influencing federal legislation. Remember, federal legislation is comprehensive—it influences state and local regulations. Be sure you and your committee are part of the Audubon E-Activist network. You'll get the monthly newsletter, Audubon Advisory, on what's hot in Congress and when your emails, letters or phone calls can make or break an issue for wildlife, you may receive an Action Alert. To sign up, go to <http://takeaction@audubon.org>. Encourage everyone in your chapter to join the E-Activist list and make a difference for wildlife.

ACTIVITIES

Once the issue priorities have been selected, the committee's activities can be divided into three broad categories: study, planning, and action. Generally committee meetings will include all three.

STUDY

As committee members individually study issues by reading, attending conferences, writing to or consulting with knowledgeable people (like owners or residents of a threatened area, scientists, and government officials), they will want to share their findings with each other. Part of each meeting should be set aside for this kind of sharing and for the experts in charge of each issue or project to update the rest of the committee on current happenings and coming events.

When the whole committee is trying to learn about an issue, you may want to ask an expert to come to your meeting to give a presentation and/or conduct a question and answer session. A film, field trip, or fact-finding trip could also serve this purpose. For example, schedule a trip to a National Wildlife Refuge or National Forest near you, if a management practice there is an issue.

PLANNING FOR ACTION

Once your group has selected and studied a priority and has some idea of the projected timing (i.e. when action will be needed), you can collectively decide what you will do, how you will prepare for it, and who will be responsible.

STRATEGY DECISION

A basic question to ask as you begin planning what you will do is: *Will a direct approach to the person/people in power solve the problem or is a larger effort needed?* In the first case, committee members may be able to accomplish the conservation goal by bringing the issue to the attention of the landowner, agency employee or lawmaker. Don't assume, for instance, that state or local agency officials know about that bulldozer that is poised to ruin a good local birding spot. Often an alert citizen has flagged illegal activity and prevented habitat destruction.

In the second case, creating public pressure on behalf of wildlife and habitat protection requires education, persistence and a little creativity. The more people you engage in your campaign the more successful you will be. However, it's not always a numbers game. Even a few emails or phone calls may be enough in some cases to persuade an elected official to your point of view. Think too about who may have personal relationships with decision-makers. One well placed phone call may be enough to carry the day. In the end, though, controversial policy decisions are likely to take a lot public involvement.

PUBLICITY

Whether you are sponsoring a work day at a natural area or a major letter writing campaign to get legislation passed, you'll want to inform people about the importance of the area or issue. Make announcements and display exhibits and fact sheets at chapter meetings; write articles for your newsletter, and work with your field trip and program chairs to plan chapter outings and programs around your issue. For instance, plan a bird walk that includes habitat used by an endangered bird or plant. You may not have areas like that in your region, but if you do, it's a great way to educate folks about the need for a strong Endangered Species Act. Think of other ways you can tie a local, state or national issue to your chapter activities. **Note:** by asking participants to sign-up and give their address, phone number and email address you'll find additional recruits to help with your projects.

If you're preparing for a major community-wide effort, reach out and inform citizens about your cause through posters and displays at malls or fairs (how about a poster contest at the local grade school), use the media to spread the word by holding a news conference, work to get a feature article placed in the style or community section of the paper; write letters-to-the-editor (one of the most read parts of the paper!); create a slide show or PowerPoint presentation on your issue and offer your program to the local Rotary club or Garden club – community groups are always looking for program ideas. Polls or petitions can be used to educate people as well as gather names, addresses and email address of additional supporters.

On a local land issue, should you fight to get your local authorities to vote for additional monies to employ a maintenance staff or could summer student help or volunteer work crews do the job? On legislation, can you get your Congressional delegate's vote by having a dozen constituents phone their office or should you get a small delegation to meet with the elected official or his or her staff.

PREPARING FOR ACTION

Before asking people to act, the committee must formulate a clear idea of what it wants them to do. List all the tasks that need to be done and decide who will do each task. For example:

Work Day at a Local Nature Area

- Make arrangements with landowner or agency (time, job, tools, etc.).
- Advertise event in newsletter and at meetings.
- Recruit 20 workers. Describe job types and what workers need to bring.
- Provide refreshments.

Letter Writing Campaign to Influence a Public Official

- Write fact sheet.
- Prepare a mall display or a letter writing table.
- Recruit volunteers (one hour shifts) to staff the table or display.
- Collect/purchase materials (pens, paper, stamps, etc.).
- Determine and prepare an incentive for writing (each writer gets a free “Extinction is Forever” button or a chance for a free membership to be drawn later in the day).
- Have postcards with message for participants to sign and mail (you’re not going to get most folks to write a letter at a table at a mall)

By carefully defining a task (how much time it will take, who can help, where it can be done), it is easier to find people who can say “yes” when asked to help.

By dividing the tasks and working together, big projects become more manageable and you can get more people to participate in your effort.

TAKING ACTION

Once the planning and preparations have been done, your group is ready for a major effort. Usually this does not take place at the committee meeting, but at a separate time and location. The work day and the letter-writing campaign are just two examples. Other actions/projects that have proven successful for chapters are:

A Field Day with an array of workshops, field trips and other learning activities for individuals and families, widely publicized with a big name speaker at lunch or at a culminating evening barbecue. A field day is great way to educate people about an important area or issue.

A VIP Field Trip for a friendly reporter or Congressperson and staff members is another idea. Introducing a decision-maker first-hand to a specific area or situation to is a great way to provide them on-the-ground education.

Sponsor a Symposium to bring together noteworthy experts to give participants the latest information and initiate discussions about a burning issue.

Meet with Lawmakers to present your case and ask him/her to take a specific action. The most direct way to get your governor to veto a bill, your representative to vote for measure or a refuge manager to change practices is to ask in person. In each case you'll need to decide exactly what you want, get together an informed delegation, obtain an appointment, prepare and deliver a concise presentation, and if necessary, be prepared to negotiate. Be prepared, too, to follow up on any questions that are asked, provide additional materials and information. Ask your representative what your group can do to help him or her accede to your request. Like Dorothy in the Wizard of Oz, you may need to bring him/her the broomstick of the Wicked Witch of the West. If you do your part, make sure they do theirs.

If you're not quite sure where to start or if you run into roadblocks, don't hesitate to call on your state office or the Washington, D.C. Policy for advice.

Petitions create an opportunity to explain the issue to members of the general public, gauge interest and collect the names, phone numbers and email addresses of supporters. (Be sure to include a check-off column that asks petitioners to commit themselves to future action, i.e., "Please let me know when the legislators will vote so I can email or phone my representative.").

A Phone Bank to reach a large number of your members and/or supporters in a short amount of time. You'll get many more people to participate by talking with them directly. (Mail requests usually net a 1 – 8% response. Phone contact with a mail follow-up can elicit a 30 - 90% response!) Get your whole committee, plus friends, to gather at a friendly office facility after hours. By using many phones for a couple of hours, you can collectively talk with scores of folks and have fun doing it. (Note: This task can also be done with email and electronic communication)

Hold a Press Conference to announce a new position on an issue or publicly respond to a charge someone else has made. Your Publicity Committee can help you with the planning and arrangements.

Organize a Special Event or series of events at a local mall or other public area with lots of people. Decide on a slogan (i.e., “Save the River” or “Endangered Species Day”) and build around it. Attract people’s attention with posters, slides, balloons, songs, and fact sheets. Give interested folks an opportunity to act (sign petitions, write letters, sign postcards, enter a raffle, buy something). Have the Mayor issue a proclamation declaring it “Save the River Day” and get press coverage. Remember the old adage: If it looks like a movement, it is a movement.

A Reception, Dessert or Dinner to launch a campaign or celebrate a victory. A social event with food is the perfect forum for recognizing leaders, welcoming newcomers, hearing brief, rousing speeches, raising funds, getting media coverage and having fun.

A House Party or coffee social to educate and create action on an issue. This social event (again with food) is a great way to discuss an issue with friends, relatives and neighbors, get some letters or postcards written (give a door prize to everyone who writes one), and build a core group of supporters. Encourage participants to hold their own house party.

An Action Network to generate calls and/or emails to governmental decision-makers on a moment’s notice, link your chapter’s hard-core activities together with an email that’s set up similar to your “Rare Bird Alert.” This action alert network should only be used when it is urgently needed to stop or influence an impending decision. To keep the network viable between alerts, you may want to use it to announce special conservation committee meetings or programs of special interest.

If your Conservation Committee would like to try an activity that is new to you, remember that your State office staff office or the Washington, D.C. Policy can provide assistance and suggestions.

FOLLOWING UP

Before the committee and all those who have helped disperse, celebrate your accomplishments with a cheer, a cool drink and a review of your work. Total the number of people you’ve educated, acres you’ve surveyed, or letters you’ve generated. Offer a genuine, friendly “thanks” to all who helped out. Recognize those who contributed and the value of their efforts in your newsletter and be sure to invite them to your next meeting or event.

RESOURCES

The National Audubon Society has staff members and printed materials to support chapters in their conservation efforts. Be sure to use them.

State Offices and the Washington, D.C. Policy can provide you with advice and suggestions regarding your issues and projects, let you know about ideas that have worked well for other chapters and refer you to appropriate staff members within Audubon, or outside of our organization in other environmental groups, or in various resource agencies and governmental bodies.

The National Audubon Society's State Office locations are:

Audubon Alaska

715 L Street, Suite 200
Anchorage, AK 99501
907-276-7034

Audubon Arizona

4250 East Camelback Road, Suite 310K
Phoenix, AZ 85018
602-468-6470

Audubon Arkansas

Heritage West Building
201 E. Markham Street, Suite 450
Little Rock, AR 72201
501-244-2229

Audubon California

711 University Ave.
Sacramento, CA 95825
916-649-7600

Audubon Colorado

1966 13th Street, Suite 230
Boulder, CO 80302
303-415-0130

Audubon Connecticut

613 Riversville Road
Greenwich, CT 06831
203-869-5272

Audubon Florida

444 Brickell Ave., Suite 850
Miami, FL 33131
305-371-6399

Audubon Hawaii

Waimea Valley Audubon Center
59-864 Kamehameha Highway
Haleiwa, HI 96712
808-638-9199

Maine Audubon

Gilsland Farm
20 Gilsland Farm Road
Falmouth, ME 04105
207-781-2330

Audubon Maryland-DC

Jean Ellen DuPont Shehan
Audubon Sanctuary
23000 Wells Point Road
Bozman, MD 21612
410-745-9283

Audubon Minnesota

2357 Ventura Drive, Suite 106
St. Paul, MN 55125
651-739-9332

Audubon Mississippi

Strawberry Plains Audubon Center
285 Plains Road
Holly Springs, MS 38635
662-252-1155

Audubon Missouri
2620 Forum Blvd. Suite C-1
Columbia, MO 65203
573-447-2249

Montana Audubon
PO Box 595, 324 Fuller Ave.
Helena, MT 59624
406-443-3949

Audubon Nebraska
Spring Creek Audubon Center
PO Box 117
Denton, NE 68840

Audubon New Mexico
Randall Davey Audubon Center
PO Box 9314
Santa Fe, NM 87504-9314

Audubon New York State
200 Trillium Lane
Albany, NY 12203
518-869-9731

Audubon North Carolina
123 Kingston Drive, Suite 206A
Chapel Hill, NC 27514-1651
919-929-3899

Audubon North Dakota
Black Building
118 Broadway, Suite 512
Fargo, ND 58102
701-298-3373

Audubon Ohio
692 N. High Street, Suite 303
Columbus, OH 43215
614-224-3303

Audubon Pennsylvania
100 Wildwood Way
Harrisburg, PA 17110
717-213-6880

Audubon South Carolina
336 Sanctuary Road
Harleyville, SC 29448
843-462-2150

Audubon Texas
427 Sterzing, Suite 109
Austin, TX 78704-1026
512-236-9075

Audubon Vermont
255 Sherman Hollow Road
Huntington, VT 05462
802-434-3068

Audubon Washington
1063 Capitol Way S., Suite 208
Olympia, WA 98101
360-786-8020

Audubon Wyoming
101 Garden Creek Road
Casper, WY 82604
307-235-3485

For Chapters without a State Office contact:

National Audubon Society
Chapter Services Office
Building 30, Fort Missoula Road
Missoula, MT 59804
800-542-2748

**NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY'S
POLICY OFFICE**

The National Audubon Society Public Policy Office is staffed by policy, communications and grassroots professionals who work primarily at the federal level to influence national policy and legislation. They are a valuable ally in your efforts to work on national issues and are happy to work with chapters on their projects.

This office is located at:

1150 Connecticut Avenue NW, Suite 600
Washington, DC 20036
Phone: 202-861-2242 we
FAX: 202-861-4290

Make sure you get the latest from Audubon's Policy Office and join the Audubon E-Activist network at <http://takeaction@audubon.org>

Other information is available on the Audubon Web site at www.audubon.org.

PUBLICATIONS

Action Alerts are emailed as needed and are targeted to specific congressional districts or states. An alert notifies an activist that “now is the time to write your Representative or Senator.” With each alert you are given details about the issue. To add your name to our list go to <http://takeaction.audubon.org>

Audubon magazine is sent to all Audubon members on alternating months and carries in-depth articles on environmental issues and conservation efforts being made at local, state, and national levels.

APPENDIX I

ACTION CHECKLIST

Learning about Issues and Teaching Others

- _____ Obtain the materials that National Audubon has prepared on the issue you're interested in.
- _____ Obtain materials from federal, state, and local government agencies – booklets, names of key administrators, and others. Ask to be put on their mailing lists.
- _____ Research local aspects of the issue and develop a fact sheet for local distribution or an article for a chapter newsletter or local paper.
- _____ Hold workshops on the issue – what it is, what others can do about it, etc.
- _____ Organize a slide show or PowerPoint to present at workshops and to schools and other organizations.
- _____ Establish a speakers' bureau: local experts, Audubon staff, you, and/or others.
- _____ Write articles about the issue and take illustrative photographs and try to place them in magazines and newspapers.
- _____ For others who want to learn, develop an issue reference guide to pertinent documents, books, agency individuals, local experts.

Recruiting Activists

- _____ Via newspaper announcements, word-of-mouth, and workshops, find other people to work on the issue, and put together a mailing list.
- _____ Identify other groups with similar stands.
- _____ Communicate with other groups and develop a mutual strategy.
- _____ Develop a telephone or email network of concerned citizens who can be counted on for support.

- _____ Develop a tallying system to monitor results.
- _____ Publish articles in your groups' newsletters.
- _____ Distribute mutually helpful materials.

Dealing with the Media

- _____ Write letters to the editor. If you do nothing else, develop a group that is comfortable writing letters to the editor. It is one of your best and easiest tools for getting your point of view in the press *and* influencing your legislators.
- _____ Identify editorial writers and environmental reports at local newspaper, radio, and television stations, and arrange to meet them.
- _____ Develop a media mailing list; mail background material.
- _____ Talk frequently to reporters, keeping them informed, and send regular updating material.
- _____ Suggest editorial responses to local and national events.
- _____ Promote stories on the local environmental effects of various issues.
- _____ Hold press conferences when warranted.
- _____ Make telephone calls to phone-in radio talk shows.
- _____ Arrange to appear on radio and television talk programs and public affairs programs.
- _____ Maintain a file of clippings on each issue.
- _____ Develop a telephone list of friendly experts to have handy when reporters and writers need extra technical help. Colleges and universities are good sources.

Getting Attention

- _____ Participate in such local events as fairs and forums.
- _____ Create and exhibit displays.
- _____ Hold benefit concerts and auctions.

- _____ Use local celebrities as drawing cards to attract the public to events.
- _____ Take advantage of public service advertising, radio spots, and television commercials.
- _____ Organize field trips.
- _____ Produce flyers, buttons, posters, bumper stickers.

Communicating with Government Agencies

- _____ Learn which agencies (federal, state, and local) administer the programs that interest you.
- _____ Determine the names of their key administrators and arrange meetings. Get to know them.
- _____ Ask to be on agency mailing lists, especially for public review activities.
- _____ Be responsive. If an agency gives you an opportunity to comment on an issue, do it.
- _____ Learn the agency's program and schedule. Determine your options for contributing information and participating in hearings.

Legislative Lobbying

- _____ Develop relationships with your U.S. Representatives and Senators.
 - Identify them and learn where they stand on key issues.
 - Find out how they voted in the past.
 - Learn their importance – do they serve on key committees?
 - Have face-to-face meetings.
 - Invite them to Audubon events.
 - Volunteer to work in their campaigns *as an individual not as a representative of your chapter.*
 - Develop relationships with elected officials and their staff.
 - Write/email letters to elected officials.
 - If their responses to your first letters are vague, perfunctory, or indicated a difference of opinion on a vote, write follow-up letters.
 - Thank them when their votes favor your position, for getting together at meetings, and for providing information.
 - When you are displeased by a vote, let them know politely.

- _____ Identify influential groups and persons willing to help in your lobbying effort.
- _____ Set up telephone or email networks.
- _____ Issue periodic fact sheets disseminating information.
- _____ Prepare testimony to present at government hearings.
- _____ Be ready to explain the National Audubon Society position on issues.
- _____ Develop working relationships and lines of communication with appropriate individuals on the National Audubon staff.

Legal Action

- _____ The law enables citizens to take legal action when other methods are not successful.

APPENDIX II

THE SIMPLE ART OF LETTER WRITING

Personal letters, emails or phone calls to Members of Congress is still the main form of voter contact with their legislators, and the prime source of constituency views. Writing an effective letter or email to your Senators or Representatives is easy. Here are a few suggestions:

When writing, use personal or business letterhead if possible, and be sure to sign your name over a typed signature line at the end of your message. Although a typed letter is more easily read, a handwritten message can be just as effective.

Having the exact return address on the letter itself is important.

When emailing, go to your legislator's Web site (www.house.gov or www.senate.gov) and find their email form. If you are responding to an Alert, personalize the sample letter with some personal views. Even one sentence or two will greatly increase the effectiveness of that type of email.

Clearly identify your issue. Give the name of the House or Senate bill number(s) if you know it.

State the reason for your writing. Detail your own personal feelings and experiences, for this provides the best supporting evidence. Explain how this issue affects you, why it is important and why the Representatives or Senators should be concerned. Write as an individual; do not mention Audubon.

Don't threaten. Letters that are unreasonable and say such things as "I'll never vote for you unless..." will harm, not help, your cause.

Ask that your Representative or Senator state his or her position in the reply. Many Members of Congress will simply let you know the status of the legislation and try to avoid any position statement. If you are not satisfied with their answers, write back. Don't hesitate to ask questions.

Of course, the timing of your communication is important...the three crucial times are (1) just prior to a bill's introduction, urging co-sponsorship; (2) when the bill comes before committee, if your Representative or Senator is on that committee; and (3) when the bill comes to the floor of either House for a final vote.

APPENDIX III

TIPS FOR WRITING LETTERS-TO-EDITORS

The letters-to-editor section of your local newspaper presents an ideal forum for reaching thousands of readers with your message, whatever it may relate to – wildlife protection, clean air regulations, energy conservation, or the latest attacks on environmental protection laws.

Some pointers:

- Keep your letter short and to the point – 250 words maximum.
- Unless you're a chapter leader writing on behalf of your chapter, your letter will carry more weight if you do not identify yourself with Audubon.
- Avoid rambling sentences and big words.
- Type the letter if possible – double spaced, one page maximum; many newspapers also accept emailed letters.
- Limit the number of points you make, and stay on the same subject.
- Be as factual as possible without being dull.
- Your letter stands the best chance of getting printed when it responds to something recently in that newspaper – be it a news story, column, editorial, advertisement or another letter. You can use the reference to a previous news item as a springboard for stating your case.
- Your letter can support and expand on something already in the news, make a point that was omitted, or disagree with and correct misinformation in whatever form it appeared.
- Ask for action – tell readers what you want them to do.
- Localize your letter – explain how this issue will affect readers' lives.
- Accentuate the positive. When you criticize, also propose a solution to the problem, or a better alternative.

Work with your Publicity Chair to take advantage of these communication channels.

APPENDIX IV

HOW TO SET-UP AN ACTION NETWORK (TELEPHONE TREE)

A Telephone Tree or Telephone Chain is a pre-arranged pyramid-like system for contacting a group of people by telephone. Operating something like a chain letter, the tree is set-up to spread a message through a large number of people who each make a few calls.

USES

- To quickly mobilize members and supporters in emergency situations, for example, when the legislature threatens to kill a bill and a barrage of letters is needed.
- To notify members of meetings, forthcoming actions and particularly of last-minute changes in plans.
- To increase turnout by providing personal invitations to reinforce mailed notices.
- To help members get better acquainted by providing them with an opportunity to communicate with each other.
- To save printing and postage costs involved in communicating brief notices by mail (telephone trees are not effective means of transmitting large amounts of information).

RESOURCES NEEDED

People

A coordinator is needed, along with a network of reliable, key people, to form a skeleton of the telephone tree. The number of key people will vary with the size of the group to be notified and the time each person has available for the project.

Time

The coordinator will spend many hours, perhaps 40 or more, organizing the tree. Once it is set-up, the tree can do dozens or hundreds of hours of total work with only five to fifty minutes' involvement by each member, depending on the number of calls each one is asked to make.

Money

None needed. Use home or cell phones at no additional costs. A major justification for telephone trees is their economy compared to mailings.

ACTION CHECKLIST

PRELIMINARIES

- 1) Make a list, with current phone numbers, of all the persons whom you want the tree to reach. Put the list on index cards.
- 2) From these people recruit a smaller number of key people whose job includes calling other people, to be the major links in the chain. (There is more than one way to organize such a chain.)
 - a) Have as few key people as possible. Since each one may be reasonable for reaching people who in turn will reach up to 10 people, be sure the key people are reliable. The effectiveness of the chain depends on their doing their jobs properly.
 - b) Impress on the key people the importance of their completing their assigned calls.
- 3) Divide up the people on your list among the chair participants. An easy way to do this is to spread the cards out on the floor and move them until you have a good, workable arrangement.
 - a) Consider assigning responsibilities geographically. This way, callers can arrange transportation while notifying members of meetings.
 - b) Generally, aim to give callers three to eight calls each so their participation in the telephone tree won't become too burdensome.
 - c) If the tree is used extensively, vary assignments occasionally to add interest and encourage members to deal with new people
- 4) Make a chart showing the key people involved and distribute it to them. Include phone numbers.
- 5) Ask key people to notify you when they are going out of town so fill-in arrangements can be made.
- 6) Hold message drills occasionally to test your chair for effectiveness and to identify weak links.

DOING IT: Operating the Tree

- 1) Start the tree as coordinator. Call your first level key people.
- 2) As the tree is supposed to be operating, spot check its effectiveness by calling a few people down the chain to be sure they have been reached.

- 3) Be sure your callers keep trying if someone is not home. If a key person cannot be reached, have the caller notify you so you can fill in for his/her place on the chain.
- 4) Arrange in advance for certain key people to notify you when they were reached so you can judge the progress of the message.
- 5) Arrange for your membership chairperson to keep you informed of changes in branch membership so you can keep you communications network current.

EVALUATION AND FOLLOW-UP

- 1) Spot check, as described above.
- 2) Ask at meetings if members were called. Take steps to be sure those who weren't are called in the future.

KEY POINTS

**Have an organization charge for the telephone tree.

** Be sure your key links are reliable.