

USING NATIONAL MEDIA FOR A NATIONAL PROBLEM A PANEL PRESENTATION TO THE SOUTHEASTERN ASSOCIATION OF GAME AND FISH COMMISSIONERS, BALTIMORE, MARYLAND,

By James E. Lee, Assistant Chief of Information,
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What a wonderful thing it would be if we could climb into a time capsule, and visit this land of ours as it was 500 years ago! Then, the water was clear and sparkling, untainted by industrial wastes or human sewage. The land itself was clean, unmarred by billboards or the blight of dilapidated slums, or the endless piles of litter that now seem to nest under every bush and behind every tree. But there's no turning back.

There's no need to dwell on the way our population has exploded, and there's no need to tell you how this population is having greater and greater impact on the land. More free time, better roads and cars, these are part of it. Just as important, for those of us who live in the cities, is the urgent need to escape now and then to our own private worlds—populated only by the wild creatures.

As more and more people spread out across the land, we are seeing drastic increases in vandalism and littering. Lest we unfairly malign the city slicker, let us point out that much of the serious littering comes from the rural people — who dump their household trash with no more thought than that of the college kid who sails a beer can from his car window.

A deluge of litter is affecting all who manage publicly owned lands—from city parks to State wildlife refuges and boating access areas to national forests and parks. Here in the East, where most of the rural land is privately owned, the deluge is also affecting private lands which are publicly used.

As one of the Federal agencies managing public lands, the Bureau of Land Management is keenly aware of the litter problem. We think we have one of the answers, and we'd like to share it with you. Let's take a look at the problem, and what has been done so far.

A Look at the Problem

The public lands, 450 million acres of public domain, are administered by the Bureau of Land Management. These lands stretch from the deserts of Arizona, up through California, all the way to the glaciers of Alaska. These lands contain many natural wonders—shining examples of natural beauty. They also contain some shining examples of the Great American Slob.

Some of the worst littering is found in the desert—where a tin can or a newspaper may outlast the litterbug who dumped it. This is not just a matter of cigarette butts and beer cans; these are garbage dumps on the public lands. We estimate we have some 2,000 of them; we figure it would cost \$10 million dollars a year to clean up. You'll find roadside litter, along some 40,000 miles of roads across the public domain. You'll find junk left behind by miners or unsuccessful homesteaders who've abandoned their claims.

You'll find household garbage beside flowing streams, endangering health, safety, and outdoor recreation. You'll find dumps containing all sorts of left-overs from an affluent society—dumps that get bigger every year.

Perhaps the most wide-spread is the litter left by the recreationist, the casual visitor to the public lands. Used to be, this kind of litter was found just along the main roads. Now, with 4-wheel-drive, the litterbug can penetrate deeper, carrying more throw-aways to leave behind. With 2-wheel transportation becoming more and more popular, there's hardly an acre beyond the reach of the litterbug.

Obviously, this kind of job is too big for the Bureau of Land Management to handle alone. We have neither the funds nor the manpower. But we've found many people ready and willing to help.

The Start of a Solution

Several years ago, one of the Bureau's field offices launched a cooperative clean-up program. Now, it's been thoroughly tested in the field. It's called "Operation Clean-Up," and it works. It started in our Arizona Strip District, that part of Arizona north of the Colorado River, in prime mule deer country.

In the autumn, hunters come from Utah, Nevada, and California. Only a handful of people actually live in the area, a few dozen in a land the size of New Jersey. BLM appealed for cooperation from the hunters.

With the help of civic clubs from the nearest city, St. George, Utah, BLM set up "Operation Clean-Up" checking stations. Volunteers from St. George helped man the stations during the short, intense hunting season.

Hunters were given large plastic litterbags—big enough to hold two empty sixpacks, or a day's trash from the average camp. This bag is the most popular item developed so far. But Arizona had other ideas, too. They developed a special "Operation Clean-Up" leaflet. Empty oil drums were placed in areas where hunters made their camps, to serve as litter collection points.

A very important aspect of the campaign was recognition. Hunters were given a commendation signed by the district manager. And other publications, including district recreation maps, repeated the message.

It all paid off. Not only were the hunters more careful with their own trash; they often joined in the spirit of the campaign and cleaned up junk and other debris left by previous hunters.

Nothing succeeds like success. "Operation Clean-Up" spread to other States throughout the West. We've found people willing to work on the big jobs—like getting rid of the junked cars. One outstanding success has been at Red Rocks Canyon, in a campaign led by BLM's Las Vegas District Office. Youth groups in the Las Vegas area cooperated to help remove hundreds of truck-loads of litter.

Last fall, Keep America Beautiful, Inc., the national anti-litter coordinating group, gave its national youth award to BLM and the youngsters at Las Vegas who helped clean up this recreation area.

Making a National Appeal

Good as it was, "Operation Clean-Up" only scratched the surface. Early last year, BLM decided to launch a national litter program. It took more than a year to get ready. Now, with a coordinated national program, we think we are on the way. Apparently the Bureau of the Budget thinks so too, since this right arm of the President has encouraged us to make maximum use of information and educational tools to fight litter.

The people we're trying to reach are the casual visitors, the summer tourists who flock to the national parks and forests and to the public lands in ever-increasing numbers. To be effective, we must reach all our visitors, wherever they come from. This means a truly national campaign, reaching across the continent.

We studied our approach from many angles. First, we felt we needed a character, to give life to the campaign and to serve as spokesman for the message. We considered a comic character, "White Bart," as an appealing human figure.

We thought the problem was too serious, though, to be handled by a silly animal. We searched for more dignity, someone who could strike a patriotic chord and appeal to young and old alike. Working with a leading design firm in Washington, we finally found him. He's a rugged outdoor man, symbol of the well-informed, respectful user of the publicly owned lands.

We wanted him to be truly national, and made him a wanderer who might be found anywhere in the United States on publicly owned land. He represents not the agency employee, but the conscience of a public which respects the land. We think he'll symbolize the thoughtful recreationist and user of the land.

Again, with help from our design firm, we searched for a name that would endure. Our choice was "Johnny Horizon."

So, we had the character and the character had a name. He had a message, "Keep it clean." Just one more element was needed, a theme to point up the need for

respecting the land and keeping it clean. The theme, we think, is simple and sincere: "Keep it clean, for this land is your land."

Developing the Program

Using these elements, we started with a litterbag for national distribution. Our first order was for 300,000—and that supply is almost gone. On the reverse of the litterbag we printed a pledge, which we hope will appeal to youngsters while not insulting the intelligence of adults. We plan to print the pledge on a pocket-sized card, for classroom and club use.

In production are television film clips and slides and radio tapes to help us make the best use of electronic media. These will feature Johnny Horizon and his theme, "This land is your land."

Is the program catching hold? Two weekends ago, I watched an amazing demonstration of the public's willingness to cooperate. Along the California-Mexico border, just west of Yuma, Arizona, I saw the Federal Government receive the benefit of the enthusiasm of nearly a thousand dune-buggy and 4-wheel-drive fans. They spent a weekend cleaning the publicly owned Imperial Sand Dunes, in places six miles wide and stretching 40 miles to the Mexican border.

Fanning out to assigned areas in their balloon-tired vehicles, they covered assigned areas across the dunes. All they left behind were tire tracks, soon to be covered by the shifting sand.

The results? An estimated 35 truckloads of litter, from car bodies and discarded appliances to miners' lamps and bottles from by-gone days.

We estimate that it would have cost our agency nearly \$30,000 to do this job, spread over such a wide area. As it was, the entire cost was \$150, the value of 3,000 litterbags.

This is the kind of thing the Johnny Horizon campaign can accomplish. We're convinced we have a winner, and we're positive, too, that this campaign can be effective on publicly owned and publicly used lands in the Midwest and East.

CONSERVATION-PUBLIC RELATIONS IN-SERVICE TRAINING PROGRAM

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One might say that this paper was conceived some fifteen years ago. At the time of its conception, I was serving as a wildlife officer in a small community. The president of the local rotary club invited me to appear at one of their noon-day meetings to present a program on and about wildlife conservation and, being somewhat of a gung-ho type officer I accepted the invitation without hesitation.

Several days passed and the date of the meeting drew near before the sky parted and, with a clap of thunder, I realized that I had placed my foot in my mouth and that I was totally unprepared to present a program to a rotary club or any other group. Believe me when I say it was a panic-stricken wildlife officer that placed an emergency telephone call to the region office to request the aid and assistance of the Regional Information Officer. The previous clap of thunder was repeated, this time accompanied by a bolt of lightning, when I learned that the Regional Information Officer would be unable to pull my proverbial fat out of the fire and I was strictly on my own. I discovered later that he was engaged with other activities and could not place proper emphasis on my meeting of a civic club in a small community. That was his opinion, my personal thoughts being there was no place or no meeting more important than the one to which I was committed.

What the Hell! These were my people. These were the fishermen that I encountered on the rivers and the duck hunters that I checked in the marshes. This