

demand much of us. And even though we feel that few of our known audience — the hunters and fishermen — resent the addition of new subject material in our efforts, there are many, we know, who cling to the old ways and would still rather see their own picture or name in our magazine, for instance, than read any story, even a hunting or fishing one.

And so we have many new problems but we also have many new opportunities.

Whether we solve the problems and capitalize on the opportunities depends largely, we think, on how well we know and are able to serve our audience.

## THE CHANGING FACE OF I & E PART II

*Mike Smith*

Over the past few years, the phrase “endangered species” has gained tremendous usage in the national media. It is a popular phrase with a multitude of interest groups: certain preservationists use it in attributing wildlife decreases to hunters; and at least one national gun sport organization claims that hunters are the endangered species; and some universal thinkers stoutly maintain that Man himself is now number one on the endangered list.

If I may borrow on the drama of current jargon, I would like to submit that in Information and Education work, we face yet another “endangered species”: the disappearing audience.

In the division of public relations in Kentucky’s Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources we sense that there have been some significant decreases in at least a few of our outdoor-related audiences; correspondingly we have indications that other audiences have grown—and some at a swift rate. How do these perceived changes effect our information work? And more importantly, how they affect our future communication patterns?

Frankly, we do not yet know. As I mentioned a moment ago, we are taking about *perceived* changes. At the present time we have no quantifiable measures of change to indicate what directions our information flow should take.

Our division is called “public relations,” but we are essentially a news service. We are charged with moving almost all news and features that originate in or pertain to the Department of Fish and Wildlife. But in our task of news dissemination, the growing question becomes: to whom are we addressing this information? What are we saying to them? What should we try to tell them? How many various outdoor interest groups do we now serve? How many *should* we try to serve?

At present, we “know” less than 10% of our potential audience: and we are not too certain about how well we know that 10%. Our Department sells more than a half-million fishing licenses per year, and nearly a quarter-million hunting licenses. Yet the League of Kentucky Sportsmen (the organization of 300 sportsmen clubs from across Kentucky which has worked so closely with the Department in the past) numbers its total membership at less than 35,000 this year; and its membership has been on the gradual decline over the past few years. So the questions arise: How do we reach the individual license holder who is not affiliated with a sportsmen’s club? Indeed, what are some of the reasons for his not belonging to such an organization? What are his outdoor interests in addition to hunting or fishing?

The questions seem endless; and some of the replies from within our own ranks often tend to complicate the issues further. One of our field biologists, while checking license receipts from a given area last year, noted a very significant increase in the number of hunting licensees under 25 years of age.

Does this represent a significant trend in hunting? And does this mean we should alter or update some of our hunting information? It could. But the data is limited; and with age as the only variable, it might be unwise to change a communication pattern. What we need is more data, with emphasis not only on age, but outdoor-use preference and where the license-holders live.

The problems of accruing audience data appear to increase with population shifts. During the past twenty years, rural populations have been on the decline in Kentucky. There are several reasons for the decline, and they have been well researched and documented by various universities and government agencies. Among the important factors in Kentucky for the population shifts are decreased employment in under-ground coal mines, increased surface mining, and periodic job opportunities in northern urban centers. While the state's rural populations have been receding, Kentucky's larger towns and cities with their suburban areas have shown rapid growth.

Obviously, then, the rural audience is smaller; but is its make-up essentially the same as it was twenty years ago? And our larger urban and suburban audience— who are we “reaching” there? Again, we are in the realm of speculation, a potentially dangerous realm if we are to effectively present the message of the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife.

In addition to our bi-monthly magazine, three mass media are regularly employed in delivering our information: news releases to daily and weekly papers, radio and television.

For the present, we are not planning any extensive work in newspaper audience identification. We issue 12 to 15 news releases to the press each month; and, thanks to the cooperation of our county conservation officers, we have a fair estimate as to how many stories are used statewide, and what types of stories receive heaviest usage. The officers are our unofficial clipping service, but their work in the past has been quite reliable. We still don't know who reads our releases in the papers; but we know that many of our stories receive wide use. And perhaps more importantly, we have a good idea as to what type or form of story many editors prefer. The stories which have gained the greatest usage over the past few months are those which are relatively short (200-250 words) and accompanied by a picture. Whether the editors found the releases truly newsworthy is a question we perhaps should not broach; but the stories *were* used. Apparently some editors always have some space to fill.

I do not mean to imply that we are satisfied with our present news release operation. We do receive some good feedback from the releases, and can make some fair guesses about the audiences we might reach. But our immediate needs in audience research concern our radio and television programs, both of which are entitled KENTUCKY AFIELD.

Right now we are in the process of beginning a research project to find out more about what our radio audience is. The first step involves some very basic survey work with the 56 radio stations that carry our weekly, 13 minute taped program. Program directors of the 56 stations are being sent brief questionnaires to determine when (and *if*) the tape is used; what the station's main type of programming is; the size of the local broadcasting market; the program directors' opinions about his audience and about the program itself.

With this brief survey we hope to get a profile of the types of stations that carry the program; and from this, we will try to make some valid guesses as to the type of audience we reach in a given area.

In our KENTUCKY AFIELD radio program we have tried to vary the content from week to week in order to appeal to the wider audiences we suspect we now have. In the past four months, topics covered included water safety and courtesy among water-skiers and fishermen; wildlife plantings to attract song-birds; collecting and identifying Indian artifacts; primitive camping; recreational opportunities in our national forests; a university research project

on aquatic invertebrates and pollution; and various research and management projects carried on by our own divisions of fisheries and game management. Has this attempt at broad-spectrum programming paid off in increased listenership? So far we have no significant increase in feedback. Hopefully, the radio questionnaire can supply us with a few answers: if the program directors are in favor of the new programming, there is a good chance that this indicates market acceptance. After all, a program director *knows* his local audience, and his local audience will determine his program selection.

A moment ago I mentioned the term feedback. It can either be praise or criticism, but it is vital in communications. As was noted in the preceding talk, we now have some new audiences we are addressing. Since the late 1960's, our department and our division have received a wide variety of requests and communications from outdoor organizations quite different from the hunter/fisherman groups. The new environmentalists are a potentially large audience we need to know more about. We have been serving them directly and indirectly for several years without really knowing them. Indeed, representatives from such new organizations have been frequent guests on our radio and TV programs, and presumably have drawn for us an audience of their peers. We feel that we need feedback or response from these groups just as much as we need it from the hunter/fisherman organizations.

The importance of these responses is that they can give us a better idea on whom to direct our information and what to include in the messages.

Our weekly television program is now aired in six broadcasting markets, with total household potential of more than 2 million, 800 thousand. Of course, it is not likely that we penetrate this full market potential. The program is not aired on "prime time" on any of the stations; in fact, two stations run the program on the "graveyard shift." But despite less than ideal air times, we realize that there is some audience watching.

Out of necessity, we will have to proceed at a rather slow pace in gathering TV audience data—the problems of producing 52 programs a year are demanding enough right now. But we realize that our TV audiences are important (perhaps our most important in terms of message impact) and we will have to find out more about them. There are two methods we may use in finding out more about our television viewers. First and in a manner similar to our radio project, we can contact the six program directors of the stations that carry KENTUCKY AFIELD TV. Here, we would not have to use a formal questionnaire, except for maintaining records and reference data; rather, we could easily use personal contact and obtain opinions and observations which might not find their way into a normal printed questionnaire.

A second means, more extensive and expensive, but with greater access to the actual audiences, would involve a combination of telephone and questionnaire surveying. The design of the project would call for the selection of a test market such as the Greater Louisville broadcasting area. This particular area is comprised of 64 counties in Kentucky and southern Indiana and represents nearly 550,000 television homes. Such a test area would allow us to inventory audiences who could be broadly grouped into "resident" and "non-resident" categories. In scope, this survey would be generally similar to our department's annual post-season game harvest survey. Of course, there would be some major differences in sampling and procedures.

The two-step survey would involve the telephone canvass of the viewing area. Each of the 64 counties would be sampled randomly, with the number of calls per county pre-determined by number of television households. The telephone questioner would inquire if the viewer is familiar with the KENTUCKY AFIELD TV program and with what frequency he or she watches the program. If the viewer is a regular viewer of the program (and this term "regular" would have to be determined), he would be asked to complete a questionnaire giving

some background on his outdoor preferences and his feelings about the television program.

Obviously such a procedure will be time-consuming and quite expensive. But it could provide some valuable first-hand information on our audiences, their tastes and preferences. With this type of information, we can suit subject matter to our audiences; we could get the right information to the right people at the right time.

At the present time, we have the potential to reach larger and more diverse groups than ever before. Increased concern over the environment has made people hungry for information, all types of information about Kentucky's water and wildlife resources. We are most willing to meet these informational needs. In fact we are quite eager to meet our new audiences and share with them the news, features and special information concerning their outdoor Kentucky.

What we are attempting to do in our audience-identification work is to serve the new publics we may have, and serve ourselves. Does that latter point sound sinister and selfish? Well, it really isn't meant to be that way. But we are in the business of news and information flow; and we want to improve and maintain our effectiveness. Increasingly we will have to rely on periodic survey research to identify and inventory the public we serve. In effect, to be a good news service, we will also have to function (at least on occasion) as a communications research group.

What we hope to accomplish in the foreseeable future in the division of public relations will depend on how well we practice communications, the art and the science.

We hope to establish a system of communications wherein all our audiences can be identified readily and readily served, a system which will keep us well-informed of our public, and our public well-informed about the Department of Fish and Wildlife and its role in Kentucky's environment.

## **THE SUCCESS OF TV SPOT ANNOUNCEMENTS**

*By  
Billy DuRant*

In my opinion, the best communications device for informing the public of particularly important messages is through the use of television PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENTS, also referred to as "spots" or simply "P.S.A.'s". The old cliché, "a picture is worth a thousand words," comes into play and with T.V. spots you have both — picture and words.

I realize that there is no substitute for newspaper news releases. P.S.A.'s cannot be produced and distributed in a day as news releases can. However, if the correct approach is taken, television can more than supplement the newspapers as a strong communications tool.

I believe T.V. spots should pertain to general subjects such as conservation, hunting and fishing information (naturally, geared to help sell licenses) or to controversial issues. A good example of the latter is the spot we produced when our \$4.25 game management permit fee was initiated. Nearly everyone saw our spot and therefore we helped the sportsmen of our state to realize that without this fee the drastic reduction of public hunting acreage would continue.

We even produced a spot pertaining to our magazine, "SOUTH CAROLINA WILDLIFE." Its airing was a touchy subject. There was doubt by some stations as to whether this was a legitimate public service. By explaining that the subscription rate was less than the actual printing cost and by sending the