**6 Minutes**

**for Media**

Prescribed Fire Training Exchange

Niobrara Valley Preserve, Nebraska

March 8-22, 2014

**The Five Basic Interview Steps**

Listen carefully to the reporter’s questions and provide simple, yet appropriate, answers. Sometimes we tend to give the same responses over and over, whether it has anything to do with the question or not. The trick is to answer the question then smoothly work in your main message. The following 5-Step approach helps you do just that. You may need to repeat these steps several times during the same interview to remain on topic.

1. Wait until the complete question is asked.
2. Answer the question directly.
3. Figure out how to bridge to *your* main message.
4. Present your main message.
5. Be prepared to back up your statements with facts or an additional message.

As you respond to questions and communicate your key messages, you should use certain words and phrases and try to avoid others. This can prove to be a difficult task, but just do your best to follow these recommendations:

**Commonly Misused and/or Abused Words and Phrases**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Word, phrase, or issue:** | **Reason, suggestion, or preferred alternative:** |
| “You know” | Don’t use it. |
| A myriad of… | Myriad stands alone. Should be “myriad \_\_\_\_\_\_” (fill in the blank - i.e. responsibilities) |
| Acronym | Is a word, not just a set of initials. For example, NASA is an acronym, CDF is not. |
| Basically | One of the most overused words. It means pertaining to forming a base, a fundamental. To say “Basically, we went home after the game” is not a correct usage. |
| Biodiversity | Fish, wildlife, and plants |
| Close proximity | Proximity means close. |
| Completely destroyed | Destroyed is another absolute. It either is or isn’t. |
| Dilemma | Not just a problem, it is a choice between two equally balanced alternatives. |
| Ecological | Natural processes |
| Ecosystem services / infrastructure | Natural benefits |
| Ecosystems | Natural areas, outdoors, forests |
| Environmental | Lands and waters, outdoors, forests |
| Environmental groups | Conservation groups |
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| **Word, phrase, or issue:** | **Reason, suggestion, or preferred alternative:** |
| Fire regime | Natural fire cycle |
| General consensus | Consensus stands alone. No qualifier is necessary. |
| Herbaceous / vegetative layer | Plants and grasses |
| I feel badly | That means to do a bad job of feeling. Should be “I feel bad.” |
| Imply/infer | These are often interchanged, but the speaker implies a message and the listener infers meaning from it. |
| Irregardless | Nonstandard English - avoid using. It’s “irrespective” or “regardless.” |
| Landscape-scale conservation | Large, connected natural areas |
| Literally | Means actually. To say a person literally exploded with enthusiasm is likely not true. |
| Lost (i.e. houses lost) | Use “burned.” We’re not looking for “lost” houses. |
| Point in time | Points are in space. Moments are in time |
| Prescribed fire | Controlled burn |
| The media is… | “Media“ is plural. Should be “The media are \_\_\_\_\_” (fill in the blank) |
| Very unique | Unique means one of a kind. It either is or isn’t. No qualifier is necessary. |
| Wildfire | Fire, [name of] fire, megafire |

* **Key Messages for the 2014 Niobrara Valley Preserve TREX:**

1. Safety is paramount.
2. Fire training is necessary and important.
3. Like rain, fire is critical in the Great Plains.
4. Pay now, or pay later.
5. The next generation of fire workers, managers, and conservationists are taking fire leadership seriously.
6. Building on past successes and lessons learned, the training exchanges have grown every year, attracting more partners and participants from around the U.S. and the world.
7. **Wildfire effects at the Niobrara Valley Preserve, such as erosion and large numbers of dead tree skeletons standing across the landscape, are dramatic reminders of what unchecked, excessive fuel loads and drought will produce. In contrast, forests and grasslands that have had the benefit of mechanical clearing and fire continue to provide healthier, more resilient ecosystems.**

\*\*\*Portions of the information contained in this document were adapted from *A Guide to Successful Media Interviews* (NIFC, 2009), located at: <http://www.nifc.gov/PIO_bb/Background/NIFC-MediaInterviewGuide2009-Landscape.pdf>.