



ORGANIZE TO WIN

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Hints, Checklists, and Do's and Don'ts for Grassroots Campaigns.
An Organizer's Guide

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Chapter 1

Eight Assumptions and Eight misconceptions about Grassroots campaigns.

Eight working assumptions.

1. Any campaign can succeed with enough community support.
2. Community support, essential for any campaign, is effective only to the extent it is expressed in the political process.
3. Elected officials (legislative officials) can always control, modify and cancel the proposed administrative actions of government agencies (executive officials).
4. Elected officials' actions always reflect the sentiments of two constituencies: voters that cast the ballots that elected them; and their staff, election campaign workers and financial supporters.
5. Agencies will align their reports and recommendations to the views of the elected officials who have authority over their staff and budget.
6. If you cannot obtain community support to get your own elected officials on your side, you can often get elected representatives from other jurisdictions to support your goals.
7. Any citizen can create and successfully execute a grassroots campaign if he has the will.
8. Campaigns succeed or fail based on how much "action" occurs. "Action" in a campaign consists of:
 - phone calls to decision makers;
 - written material they actually read or physically handle;
 - personal contacts with decision makers and their staffs,
 - comments expressed by people in physical attendance at meetings.

Everything else - alerts, videos, TV coverage, advertising, posters, email, etc. are mere precursors and facilitators to action. They are not, in themselves, action.

Eight common misconceptions

1. The time window for campaigns is usually critically short.

No project, no matter where it is in the administrative pipeline, will be implemented by any administrative agency at the local, state or federal level if local elected representatives object. ANY project can be stopped up to the irretrievable point where trees are on the ground, holes are dug or physical structures actually built. Not only is it not over till it's over, if you are determined enough, it will NEVER be over. Even land which has been successfully up-zoned can be subsequently down-zoned.

2. People will do what they promise to do

Regardless of what the average citizen promises to do for you on an issue, most are too

timid to actually contact a public official and won't, unless you properly prepare them to do it. The most important contact with any prospective letter writer or phoner is not the one that secures a commitment to take action, but the later follow up to make sure he performed the promised action. 90% of those who agree to take action will not do so till the second or third follow up. Sometimes a person will promise and fail to take action as many as 6 or even 10 times before he actually does so. But once you can get anyone to take the first action, you can get future action from that person again and again.

3. All you need to win a campaign is good TV and Press coverage.

Good TV coverage for an issue is always to be sought but generally information delivered via TV does not create action. Often when people see an issue portrayed on TV, they think someone has already taken care of it. It is hard enough to catch a TV segment you set up yourself on the evening news so consider how unlikely it is that an actual decision maker will accidentally stumble across your particular TV piece. The only thing a TV news piece is guaranteed to do is get reaction from a cashier in your local supermarket or bank who says he saw you on TV. As with so many other aspects of grassroots enviro action, activists often confuse self promotion and activity with action. TV news and print stories are merely the raw material with which a campaign creates action: they are not in themselves action.

4. Alerts, email and calls for action are a good way to get "Action"

The test of any lobbying campaign is how many letters and phone calls are delivered to decision makers, NOT how many alerts or appeals for action are sent out. The only way to know if your campaign is successful is count the letters yourself or get a count from the person who handles the agency's or representative's mail. Any fool can send out 2000 or 2 million Email alerts. The fruits of any campaign are specific actions taken by individuals - not the precursor calls and exhortations for people to take action.

5. Elected representatives will do more than represent their constituents.

Elected officials merely represent others; they generally do not perceive their role as teachers or change-agents. They are not the leaders of the public, they merely represent the voters who put them in office or can remove them from it. The class of people who vote and those who live in an area are very different.

Elected representatives will always reflect the views and will of voters in their district and will bend themselves into pretzels to keep their ear to the ground. But for conservatives from safe districts, whose only real fear is having a serious primary challenge, their obsession is with the highly motivated voters from their own party who vote in their primaries. So as little as 10% of the population in a district may well determine the views and the voting behavior of a representative regardless of the majority views of the residents of their district. The best predictor of the views of any representative is the prevailing sentiment of those who cast ballots. No matter what the issue, what representatives do, is a function of who they talk to and what information and lobbying they have been directly exposed to.

6. You can lobby another without being lobbied yourself.

Anytime you lobby another, you are lobbied back or counter lobbied. If the person on the other side is better at it than you are, you may find the person whose mind you seek

to change has in fact changed yours. When you send a deeply committed but ill-prepared person to lobby a trained professional politician, whose survival depends on his ability to be persuasive, that conversation will be a two way process. The result of a lobby effort may be that your person's views and opinions are changed not the reverse. Much of what is described as "selling out" or "wimping out" is simply a function of being exposed to counter or reverse lobbying which performace must occur in the lobbying process.

7. You can stop projects without making anybody mad at you.

False. Most environmentally bad projects make a windfall for someone and when you stop them or oppose them, the beneficiaries will get very mad at you. In fact, the best way to find out exactly who benefits is to look at who gets mad. Generally, the more effective you are at protecting the environment, the more people will tend to get upset. Until you win, assume that efforts to reduce tension, explore common ground and reduce community tension are merely efforts to get you to stop. Montaigne said that people will eventually forgive you for killing their child, but will never forgive you for taking their money. Launching a campaign with core members who fear ever making anyone mad is like running a race while carrying an anvil. People who fear conflict endanger campaigns because their fear emboldens the opposition to make personal attacks on you like blood in the water puts sharks in a frenzy.

8. If you just play nice, you will eventually win.

Hopefully you will never encounter intimidation in a public meeting to get you to go away or back down. But it does happen. If you are regularly being bullied or intimidated in public meetings, turning the other cheek only encourages more of the same behavior. You must bring to such a meeting people tougher than the people who are trying to intimidate you. Bullies always back down when confronted. Once you demonstrate you can't be intimidated you generally will not encounter it again. Once bad guys succeed in verbally or "metaphysically" intimidating you, they get positive reinforcement to do it again. Usually the toughest people you can bring to any meeting to confront intimidation are mothers with children, or your "mama bears".

Chapter 2 Essential Elements of Grassroots Campaigns

Successful environmental campaigns resemble one another - unsuccessful ones all fail in their own way.

Understand the steps in the permit processes and the time lines and deadlines for every step.

Keep close watch on all the administrative and legal steps a project goes through and do not fail to take appropriate action, file documents, testify, lodge objections, etc., at every point. Be aware of approvals and permits that the lead agency may have to go through to perfect its application. For example the wetlands rules for a county or state may be too weak or unenforced to stop a project. However, that project may depend utterly on federal loans, the funding of which may well rely on other agencies to approve the wetlands aspects and those agencies rules may be more strict and have their own appeal and input processes. This is where attorneys and friends in state and federal agencies can be helpful.

Know who owns the land

Any campaign, whether about cutting federal forests or building an industrial park, must take place on land owned by someone and will be governed by rules and regulations open to the public. The exact process involved depends on who owns the land, where it is, and who will provide the financing. Public land is usually open to public scrutiny, and will generally have been subject to planning processes which have created a formal public record. Private lands varies according to location. As you proceed from private land inside city limits to land outside the city but within a city's administrative boundary to the land in a county, different administrative rules and processes will apply. It is always possible to find out everything you need to know about ownership from public records. Know what you are dealing with before you begin.

As public funds are increasingly used to finance private schemes, hybrids like private/public partnerships on public and quasi-public land are seen. Usually the more environmentally flaky a project is, the more economically risky it is; and so, the more public funds are involved. But the more public funds are involved, the easier it is to stop. Most developers and environmental bad actors are pretty lazy, so the rules and laws have to be simple for them to operate successfully. Foiling them can be a lot easier than you might think. Checking public records of land ownership also alerts you to conflicts of interest. Once, to my shock I found the underlying mortgages on the land involved in a project we were opposing were actually held by a supposed member of our own group. If you do a lot of private land activism, you might want to get the public county tax records from your county assessor and put them on your own home computer. It is generally a simple matter to find out who has the mortgages on a piece of land and all mortgages owned by and owed to any person, as well as the owners of any corporation. Title companies and banks are paranoid about lending on land already encumbered with loans, liens and easements or to people overextended, so they insist that these records be easy to understand and open to their (and your) scrutiny.

Projects that stink environmentally, invariably stink politically.

When you take the lid off really environmentally bad projects, you will invariably find public funds used to enrich a bad actor with political connections. Anyone who finds an exception to this should feel free to call me collect 24 hours a day, as I am trying to find a counter example and in ten years of doing this full time I haven't found one yet. Environmental sleeze=political sleeze=public funds. The idea that business development involves a thrifty person who saves up, buys a commercial lot, gets a mortgage, builds a business and runs afoul of rabid anti-environmentalists is pure fiction. Projects like that are invariably benign and harmless. Virtually everything that holds itself out as public/private community and economic development partnership and most infrastructure improvements generally merely use the "Jobs" angle to package bad things in seductive, attractive wrappings.

Get local folks interested in the issue; engage and use their individual and unique talents.

While problems do arise in mobilizing grassroots lobbying, once the average, local, citizen person gets their first exposure to the process, they find it empowering and come to enjoy it. You will find local people genuinely concerned about the environment and very responsive when asked to help. Many have been just waiting for someone to ask.

Start your campaign on a sound foundation

- Create a file. Every campaign begins by organizing a file. In this file will go all original correspondence, lists of supporters, copies of newspaper stories, position papers, contacts and resources.
- Inventory your human resources. Create a data base of your supporters. This includes the name and phone number of every person who will agree to do something on your issue. Begin identifying those who can act as telephone and letter tree captains who can help you organize. Your goal is to get the maximum number of people who will help write letters, go to meetings, make phone calls and contribute money.
- Raise some initial seed money to cover out of pocket expenses. This may be done as simply as just asking every one of the early supporters to put in some seed money for photocopying, phone calls etc. Later you can use bake sales, raffles, direct appeals and seek grants. If you have a good reason to need money, people will always give it to you - but only AFTER you ask. Asking for money for the community to protect and defend itself is not like asking for it for yourself.
- Create an organization and make a letter head. Call it Friends of the Forest (or whatever your cause may be), Save the Whales (or whatever you wish to save) etc. A letter to local elected officials is much more effective on a letterhead which shows that here is an organization behind the campaign.
- Select one spokesman to represent the campaign to talk to the media. Don't have two or three different people tripping over each other and giving out different stories and opinions if you can possibly avoid it.
- Create a list of primary contacts. If a campaign is community based, such as fighting a local open space issue this may be the voter files for the election precincts in the town, which you can get from your county elections office - or even the local phone book. For a state-wide campaign, this may be a list of all the groups who might help, like regional and statewide environmental groups, hunting and fishing clubs, even churches and religious organizations.
- Try to get women - particularly mothers - involved in your campaign to the maximum possible extent. Lois Gibbs showed us that the most tenacious environmental activists are often women who are mothers. She called them "Mama bears." Nothing is as aggressive as a mother bear trying to protect her cubs. In my humble opinion, once women generally are oriented and motivated, they make the best organizers and activists. Every good mom is a great organizer.
- If you have a problem that is community based, do a canvass; knock on every door and educate and find volunteers. Generally a person can canvass 30 houses per hour. Get a map of the

city, divide it up into small parts, and send a team to each areas. Do not have people work alone - for security and general moral support it is best to have teams. In these canvasses hand out your materials, ask for support, and record the names of those who are interested in helping. Some campaigns are very successful in getting written letters at the door, (carry an extra clipboard). Do NOT go into houses. Once you do, you waste too much time and get bogged down, and of course you will have a potential security problem. Stay on the doorstep. To estimate how many people you will need to canvass a town, divide the population by three to get the number of houses and divide that by 30, and you have an idea of total canvassing hours required. Figure folks can canvass for 4 or 5 hours at a stretch. Leave the hippies and dreadlocked home as they will just make a bad impression. Don't canvass on Sunday till after 1:00 as people will be in church or wonder why you are not. Use the good leads you get to create a data base for the purpose of inviting people to public meetings and becoming active volunteers.

Generally people will welcome these visits but some of the contacts (5% give or take in small towns, more in larger ones), will be rude and obnoxious. Therefore, folks who canvass may need moral support for the occasional door that is slammed in their face. But most people who try canvassing find they enjoy it. It is very rewarding in a way almost nothing else is. There are so many people out there who want to be involved, and these contacts can provide them with an entry into doing things they perceive as useful and good. Labor unions and Democratic party activists can give you pointers on canvassing. (Generally conservatives and right-wingers don't canvass much and don't know how to do it.) As you compete a canvass cross off the streets done or you will lose track.

Tabling at supermarkets fairs and public events can be useful. Sometimes the national or regional enviro groups have major conferences where you can also do a table and display and hand out your literature. Have a basic table of pictures, flyers, sign-on petitions, and written material available to use at any of these places or events. Remember, always educate, and collect names and money.

Decide on the purpose of your campaign and select one individual to be the spokesperson.

In any ongoing campaign the politics and facts of the situation change constantly. What may be a sound strategy on Monday might require revision on Friday. Serious problems can arise in a coalition where one partner in the coalition (or one spokesman in a single organization with several spokesmen) decides to change a strategy without fully informing others. This can lead to much bad feeling. Changes in strategy must be fully cleared with other principals. As with a line of linked skaters, the longer the line the more likely even a small change in direction may result in out of control actions at the end of the line. The same dynamics that make it difficult to choose a single spokesman at the beginning of a campaign will inevitably lead to policy confusion and hard feelings somewhere down the line. A campaign without a spokesman is just a well intentioned mob. If you think it is hard to choose a spokesman when your campaign is just a half dozen folks sitting around doing planning, that it is nothing compared with the difficulty of choosing one when the pressure of media inquiries or demands for witnesses at public events and other breaking events places demands on your group for positions on alternative solutions and compromises that may be offered. Ignore this step and you may find yourself, at some point down the road, as other groups have, having two different witnesses at a hearing with two different positions.

Create a well designed one page alert that summarizes your issue and makes an effective call to action.

Every campaign needs a compelling, well written, one page, accurate actionable alert. This alert must be a persuasive highly motivating, call to action. It can be used in various ways: as a press release, meeting handout, text of a letter to an editor, poster, and most importantly a reference to where and who to call .You cannot have a serious campaign without one. Create a one page 8 1/2 x 11” multi-purpose alert that clearly and dramatically summarizes your issue. Your alert should clearly state the problem and give a brief background explaining what you want people to do, so anyone with no prior knowledge of the issue whatsoever has enough information to:

- grasp the issue;
- know why it is important that they act;
- what action you want them to take (call, write, fax, Email, come to a meeting; etc.

The alert should state exactly who to contact, when to contact them, and include the next legislative or administrative action that will occur.

This one page alert should be written by the campaign’s best writer and the best brains in the campaign must be involved in its crafting. It should be in black and white and not depend on color, so when it is photocopied and passed from hand to hand all the points will be retained. If possible, get someone with graphic artist capabilities to choose the fonts and do the layout.

Essential components of a basic alert.

- A concise explanation of the problem with a specific call to action
- A summary of the problem and background: Why this campaign? How did we arrive at a need for this campaign?
- A clear statement of the specific relief you seek from the agency or legislative body with jurisdiction over the problem. For example, we want agency x to withdraw proposal z. We want council x to vote for alternative y at meeting z. We want the deadline for this proposal extended to that date. Every personnel director will tell you that the most common problem with complaints from employees is that people seldom state the exact relief they seek. Agencies, legislators, and the entire political process is set up to deal with people who seek specific solutions to a specific problems. Generally solving this issue also helps solve the “who will be our spokesman” problem. This is because although most activists in a campaign will agree on the nature of the problem, when real progress occurs and the other side is ready to settle some campaigns unfortunately discover that their activists have real differences about what specific relief is acceptable. This is why sometimes at the end game of campaigns, the intra-organizational conflict among the good guys is more virulent than the inter-organizational conflict between opposing sides.
- Specific actions people can take to accomplish your goal: Exactly what you want people to do and how they can do it. Call person x at this number. Go to this meeting at this date and time. Write a letter to this person at that address and say so and so.

An effective alert takes your data and turns it into information, then it takes that information

and makes it interesting information. It provides clear, simple, actionable suggestions. It must be elegant in that it stand alone and needs nothing else to be understood. It is complete on its face.

Be prepared to Seize unexpected Opportunities

A successful campaign may not just defeat a bad proposal, it may provide an opportunity to accomplish new goals and environmental protections that would never have been accomplished without the threat you are combating. I remember one timber sale in which, after the Forest Service withdrew the sale, the activists asked for the land to be reclassified and withdrawn from the timber base and the FS agreed. Not only was the sale stopped, but the reclassification of the land meant that it will never be tried again.

Remember how Israel got Jerusalem back. When its neighbors attacked, Israel pushed its enemies back to its original borders and then further and took some of their territory too, and Israel ended up with much more territory than it began with. It now controls the whole city of Jerusalem, a feat they could never have accomplished without first being attacked.

I know of one campaign where a developer owned about 400 acres of land and wanted to develop 5 acres of it. He was successful but in the process got so much hassle over it he gave up on developing the whole 400 acres. So, activists ended up ahead of where they started, and accomplished a larger goal they never had any hope of reaching without the first attempt to develop (which actually was successful). The environmentalists lost one small battle but won a larger war.

Prepare alternatives to bad proposals

- Decide exactly what outcome you want. It is often not enough to just be against something; you also need to present an alternative. We do not want an industrial park there; we want a nature preserve. We do not want a timber sale on that mountain; we want it set aside as open space. If you have an alternative that requires legislative action have someone who is qualified prepare that alternative as a specific proposal or a piece of legislation.

Often developers will make a proposal to develop a specific area, such as a thousand acres, when they really hope all along to get only half that area, 500 acres in our example, as a compromise. If you offer an alternative of a thousand acre park or a two thousand acre park, it will be easier to avoid compromising on the 500 acres they wanted all along. The only way to avoid bad guys bothering you all the time is to teach them that when they try something they always end up worse than they started. The momentum, organizing, public interest and data collection any threat creates can often be used to accomplish greater ends than merely ending up back where you started. If you go to the Israel section of a big library and read a few books by PLO political strategists, you will find they maintain that the Six day war was actually provoked by Israel to give them an excuse to grab Jerusalem. They say Arab communications were manipulated and falsified by Israeli intelligence to that end.

Attacks on the environment by developers and extractors can be wonderful new opportunities to do things that would not have been possible had the threat not arisen in the first place. Conversely some environmentalists have read too many Dave Foreman books and in the thrall of "Wildlands Project" thinking have launched major campaigns to protect

regional landscapes without doing the necessary grassroots political organizing first. Some have ended up not only with failed campaigns, but invigorating and energizing the “wise use” who are emboldened to try to roll back protections already in place. So, moving the ball back from where it started when the play began, can work both ways.

- The hardest part of a campaign will come when your opposition sees you are organized and they then want to compromise on a “win-win” solution. Often some of your people and groups may be weary and ready to compromise. If you have a specific alternative, you can avoid compromise and giving away “half”, when in fact that is what your opposition expected to get all the time. Make sure you discuss with your core people what you will settle for, so offers to settle and compromise do not come by surprise. If your campaign is against a bad proposal to develop 1000 acres and you counter with an alternative to protect 20,000 acres as a park, you can always offer to settle for a (mere) 10,000 acre park because you have created goal posts such that rolling the proposal back to zero can appear as a reasonable compromise. Absent a counterproposal you may find yourself considering offers to “settle” for a 500 acre development.

In a recent campaign the problem was a plan to develop a thousand acres. Our group countered with a full scale campaign to set aside 30,000 acres, and the compromise looked like it was coming in at approximately 10,000 acres. In this case our group took the problem and used it as an opportunity to raise the level of awareness about ecological values, then mobilized the whole community and created such a backlash that politicians went all the way from supporting the bad idea to opposing it, and then supporting a counter-proposed good idea instead. In this case, in excess of 7000 letters were generated by a very small group of people who were particularly well organized. They used the bad proposal to move their own agenda. If all you do is always end up back where you started it, does not discourage the bad guys. They just come back again.

Get the Community to turn out for public meetings and be sure they know what to do, and not do, once there.

Set up lots of public meetings and do advance work for them. This is where your well designed one page pre-prepared alert (see 7 above) is useful. Use them as flyers, and have one with room for a date and time that can be run off with the meeting location to be filled in. Call representatives of organizations in the area to alert them to the meeting. Have pre-prepared form letters or post cards ready for the audience to complete and sign or give them time at the end to write their letters. A meeting that does not end up with signed postcards, or letters, a petition, or money is a wasted opportunity. Merely running a press release about a meeting may produce (if you are lucky) 30 attendees; pre-calling and doing advance work such as phoning to get the turnout up, may produce 100 or more folks at the same event. Churches are good contacts and most Christians are concerned about the natural world, even though sometimes the noisy wise use folks seem to have locked up the Christian community. Actually it is not so, and pastors and priests are often excellent contacts to get turn out at your public events. Leave flyers at the high schools with the teachers to give to the kids.

Don't be afraid to pass the hat for funds at your meetings. If you make direct appeals people will come through, but only if they are asked. A can at the door marked “Contributions” may

produce a few dollars, but if you ask people to please contribute and point out the can and hold it up or, even better, pass it through the audience, you will get 5 or 10 times more money out of a meeting. People are always responsive to direct personal appeals, but left on their own to give money or go to a meeting, they usually will not come through. You have to ask. Alas, most people do not like to ask others for commitments or money, but there are a few people who can do this, so cultivate those people to do this specific task. See sec. xxx for more on “closers”.

Thoroughly prepare any written or oral presentations to public bodies.

- Set up visits between your supporters and public officials. The more the better.
- Inventory your technical resources. Every environmental campaign needs its own particular resources. For a timber sale it might be foresters and geologists. For a golf course, it could be pesticide experts. Brainstorm every technical angle in which the project is vulnerable. Find professional contacts who can give testimony and provide arguments to help your case. At the early stages, sometimes a political organizer who manages political campaigns is the best resource since they are trained to go into communities to find active volunteers and get commitment. I would not overlook used car salesmen particularly the kind known as “closers,” as their whole skill set is getting people from “maybe” to “yes” and convert interest into commitment. Try to find people who understand how to get people to move from interest to action. Later you will need technical support, but early on you need people who can inspire and motivate others.
- Begin calling and writing officials who have jurisdiction over the issue and make sure that the issue is raised at every public meeting. Get it on the agenda every month. Turn out your supporters for those meetings. You will have some people who can stand and talk and others who are too timid but may be willing to go along to provide moral support and a receptive audience for those who do.

Chapter 3 How to get help from others.

Sometimes your issue is under the jurisdiction of an elected or administrative body, but your local representative is not supportive or may oppose you. Then you will have to enlist the aid of other enviro groups to lobby their representatives to overcome your own representative. An environmentalist in New Mexico won't be able to get his Senator to oppose a midnight rider to convert public land grazing leases to outright ownership (his Senator probably wrote it), but a Senator from Vermont might be able to stop it. A forest abuse has yet to be invented that will motivate a rural Oregon State legislator to squeak, but the State Representatives from Portland might do battle. So an essential part of doing grassroots activism is knowing how to call upon others to come to your aid. For purposes of illustration, the following is an example of a campaign strategy to get a federal representatives in another state to co-sponsor a piece of environmental legislation. But the process would apply just as well to getting a State Representative from a distant part of your state to support something your local representative opposes.

Remember that any environmental group has but a finite amount of capital to use in lobbying their local representatives and you are asking them to use some of it to help you. To encourage them to cooperate offer to reciprocate and to lobby your local rep on issues of importance to them.

A . To-Do list Before you call a distant environmental group to lobby their representative on your behalf.

1. Set up a log (a file folder works nicely) to keep a continuous record of your contacts: dates of calls, names, addresses, and phone numbers of your contacts and the representative(s) being targeted; follow up dates; and summaries of your conversations. Keep this by your phone so you remember to record all activity from start to finish.
2. Outline what you plan to say in the phone call to ensure you cover all your points.
3. Know your proposed contact. Accurate names, addresses and phone numbers are a must to prevent wasting time tracking people down. Environmental organizational lists are often as much as 50% obsolete.
4. Know something about the local rep's position on your issue.
5. Be sensitive to the local political ecology. Does the Rep have many active environmental organizations in their district? Are you calling an urban chapter whose service area includes more than one Rep? Each state and congressional district has unique circumstances, and what works in one place will not always work in another.
6. Coordinate your efforts with other ongoing efforts to avoid uncoordinated contacts within the same congressional district. If two different groups in a district approach a Rep about an issue, neither knowing the other is working on the same issue will cause problems.
7. Chapters of national groups, e.g. Audubon and Sierra Club, have established national and state mechanisms for lobbying on out-of-state issues. Those organizations are best contacted

by their own sister-counterparts in your area. An Audubon chapter in the east will be responsive to an Audubon chapter in the west, but probably not to a Sierra Club chapter, and vice versa.

The Initial Call

1. An effective opening is to explain in your initial contact that you have virtually no Reps willing to support you and you are totally dependent on finding representatives in other areas who will stand up for your issue.

You cannot succeed with your project, legislation etc. without help from other regions.

2. Explain that you need support from outside our region; and ask for a commitment to help. If the person is not willing to give you an enthusiastic commitment, ask if they can refer you to someone else who might be able to help. If you can't get a firm commitment up front, don't waste any more time with that person.
3. Be prepared for your contact to come back with something like: local Representative X would be a co-sponsor of your bill, or take on your issue but a major local newspaper has run an editorial against it. Can someone from your area contact the rep with a press packet or pay them a visit? You may be invited to speak at out of state environmental meetings. Expect that some environmental groups whose help you seek must check with their boards or umbrella groups or state organizations before they can commit to anything.
4. You may find that the group whose aid you seek has ideas different from yours about the best strategy to solve your problem. In fact you may well find yourself lobbied to support their ideas. On the other hand an environmental organization unfamiliar with your issue will need to be briefed in more depth before they make their contacts.
5. Be specific about the exact task that you want them to perform; e.g. obtain a co-sponsor of a bill, thank a Rep for being a co-sponsor, write letters to editors of local newspapers.
6. Make your request actionable. Don't expect your contact to do a lot of original research, writing or digging. Make it as easy as possible for them to comply with your request. Provide background materials; video tapes, camera ready copy for their newsletters, fact sheets, newspaper article reprints, etc. Some of the very best grassroots lobbying efforts have been achieved by people far away from an issue showing video tapes to their representatives. Encourage that sort of video tape use.
7. In the campaign season, politicians hold public meetings. Try to have local people raise questions about your issue at those meetings.

Follow up

1. Most of the people you contact in other states will agree to do lobbying for you, but 80% will actually do little or nothing at all unless you follow up to remind them to follow through. Make follow up calls about two weeks after your initial call.
2. At the initial contact work out specific agreements on what will be done, and more importantly, how feedback to you will be provided. If these steps are not clear up front

too often initial assurances to visit and call Reps or their staff's will be implemented as tepid requests for information, or a timid inquiry along the lines of "Does the Congressman know about ...?" By the time you find this out, it may be too late to get the effort back on track. Getting people to lobby others is basically a form of assertiveness training.

3. Be prepared to spend "quality time" on the initial contact. Obtain three commitments: to take specific action, to confirm that action by postcard or phone, and to provide that confirmation by a certain date.
4. Let the person know that if you do not get confirmation by the date agreed, you will be calling them back to follow up. Make the time frames in weeks. Send a pre-addressed postcard that they can use to notify you of the way in which they followed through on their commitments. Ask for a copy of any letters that are sent to Representatives, for copies of published letters to the editor, and for copies of any replies they receive, either positive or negative. Contacts which result in negative responses are often very useful intelligence for national lobbyists. If your contact agrees in the initial phone call to send you copies of letters and responses and to give you feedback by postcard or phone by pre-agreed dates, then, and only then, do you know you have a serious commitment.
5. Provide feedback on results. Often local groups won't know if their congressional contacts bore fruit. For example if a Representative signs on as a co-sponsor of a bill, the local group should be informed and congratulated. Unfortunately this is seldom done.

B. Motivating individuals (as opposed to groups) at a distance

Of course an important resource for lobbying for any environmental issue are the current-members in our own organizations. But often overlooked is the even larger resource represented by the friends and relatives of our members across the state and country. When we organize our members to mobilize those people in a campaign it represents a powerful potential force. Contacting friends and relatives in other parts of the country and asking them for help is similar to enlisting distant organizations for help but with important differences.

1. Most people not already involved in environmental work or political activity have no idea how to contact their own representatives and may find the idea intimidating. They may not know that it is possible to speak to them, or that they hold local meetings constituents can attend. Be prepared to furnish telephone numbers, addresses, and even names of local Representatives. Expect to be required to explain how the political process of the United States works, and that it is possible for citizens to affect it.
2. Unfortunately the average citizen's understanding of environmental issues is often as spectacularly uninformed as their knowledge of how the political process works. For example in the Ancient Forest campaigns we found that people in the East did not know that Federal Forests and National Parks weren't the same thing, nor did most know, and would not initially believe, that clear cutting is allowed in them. (They must see pictures in books or on television before they are convinced.) Be prepared to explain and convince.
3. Encourage letter writing parties. Group situations remove many of the psychological and procrastination problems that arise when you ask a person to request action from elected officials.

4. If people are contacting professional groups such as lawyers and accountants, remember that articles and appeals in professional publications, newsletters, magazines, etc. while good for general consciousness raising, generate astonishingly few actual letters or action of any type.

Thank anyone who helped.

Whenever you ask someone to lobby for you let them know how it turned out. And thank them no matter how well it went.

C. Get the right professional and technical help, like attorneys and geologists, but make sure you don't lose control over your issue to them.

Use professionals for their special expertise but don't abdicate the management and strategy of your campaign to them. Just because someone is a lawyer does not mean they understand your local politics or have a better feel for the timing of a educational or media campaign than you do. A biologist may be able to detect all the scientific vulnerabilities of a bad project but don't depend on him or her to tell you how or when to deploy that advice in an administrative or legal setting. A campaign may require many professional skills but all of them must remain subordinate to the campaign manager who integrates them into an over-all strategy.

DON'T OVERLOOK FEDERAL EMPLOYEES IN THE AGENCIES The Hatch act is history! Political action is now legal.

Federal employees can now participate in direct political action on their own time just like everybody else. The number of employees of land management agencies is so large in proportion to the total number of employed adults in many rural areas that nobody could push you around if you organize them as a political force. Local environmentalists and federal employees unions sometimes make a good team.

Chapter 4 The secret of using Email and lists to ripen an issue

The subject of using and misusing email and its pitfalls as a medium is discussed more fully at <britell.com>

Just as with news stories, important information you receive via Email is useless until it is packaged and delivered to an actual decision maker. So if you are in a campaign and some researcher or witness provides a dynamite Email post with important information that would motivate a decision maker, you cannot assume it will ever be seen by the decision maker. Sometimes the best delivery vehicle for an Email post is to send it as a fax. Other times printing the email and putting it in an envelope is best. Unless you have the personal Email address of a staff person or otherwise know they read all their email it is probably best to fax an email to a decision maker or print it and send it my mail. Remember an incoming Email to an office will have to be printed before it can be delivered to your representative, but a fax usually arrives as a piece of paper. If a fax is received on the representative's computer it can easily be turned into a readable piece of paper.

Powerful Email is only potential lobbying material until it is actually read by the intended recipient. Some agencies seldom hear from the public and a hundred emails is a big event that may completely turn them around on an issue. Other offices who are lobbied constantly may not even notice a thousand Emails.

But in general, less and less email is read any more, especially in government offices. Email should go through the three steps described in handling news items. (see xxx) Usually a decision maker will not read your Email on a computer but on a piece of paper. Because of the variety of Email programs and the non-standard way they display text, assume that anything you send by Email is likely to be printed with orphan lines, strange paragraphing, oddly wrapped line feeds and other legibility problems unless you can control this yourself. As with all communications, email needs to stand by itself so usually you should put a short header on it that summarizes its content and specifically tells your recipient what is in it and why they should read it. e.g. "This email is about the problem of so and so and contains..."

Congressmen and senators may have one staff person to deal with the problems in one geographic areas and another in DC who specializes in a subject area and you cannot assume that a communication sent to one will ever reach the other. Often one has to send separate communications to several different staff people in different locations to increase your chances of getting through. I know of one staff person who never returns phone calls but reads and responds to almost every piece of email yet I know of another who ignores all email but returns all phone calls promptly. One senate aide liked to get important email at her personal email address, but I had to promise not to ever give it out nor over use it.

Communications with different decision makers must be approached on a case by case basis.

Lobbying is usually best accomplished by paper, not email

A well written Email alert sent to 2000 people who are known activists will probably result in less than 30 letters or phone calls. However, a public meeting of 100 people to mobilize public

concern, with postcards passed out for people to sign at the end of the meeting, often will result in 50 or 100 signed pieces. Multi-part postcards will generate several postcards from each person; one pre-addressed to an agency, one to a representative etc.

In one recent campaign a group made a series of public slide show meetings and at the end of each meeting people were asked to fill out postcards. This resulted in over 4000 multi part postcards addressed to different levels of government. In general, one public meeting with an appeal at the end to take action before people leave the room will result in more written material than a 5 minute piece on national TV that makes the same points.

Sometimes the best use of a thousand postcards is a media opportunity where you set up a press event as you deliver several large boxes filled with them.

Chapter 5 Why Politicians do bad things

(For an essay on politicians, politics and elections from a grassroots environmental perspective that goes into this issue in more depth see <Britell.com>)

When a really good politician does a really bad thing there are four things activists should do:

1. Ask them to explain exactly why they did it.
2. Tell them you are very disappointed.
3. Ask them not to do it again.
4. Forget it.

Believe it or not, highly paid lobbyists for business usually skip steps 1-3. They know that their work gives them access, and they don't sweat individual votes. As long as they have access, year in year out, they know that over the long run they will prevail, and so they cut their elected allies an amazing amount of slack. And they never, never, go public on them.

Most elected officials are either good people or sincerely try to reflect the wishes of their constituents as they understand them to be. Ultimately a representative must represent and reflect their constituents' views or they will not survive.

If you are in a campaign, it means your elected official has not yet been convinced of the validity of your views - if he or she was, you would not need the campaign in the first place. Campaigns and elections are driven by money and the decisions of elected officials usually represent the wishes of their campaign contributors, but it is NOT because they are being forced to vote one way or another, it's because they are exposed more often and more forcefully to the views of those who contribute than to others. Effective lobbying is a process of changing a representative's mind by exposing him to your views and arguments to counter those of the bad guys. Seldom can anyone on any side of an issue dictate the way any representative will vote. It is generally highly improper and usually unproductive to try to demand an elected representative vote a certain way. They vote the way they think is best. The problem with American "money politics" is that some people get more "face time" and thus have more opportunities to persuade officials of certain courses of actions. If a politician intends to run again, then faced with a clear choice between the will of the constituents and the will of his contributors, the constituents will win. Voters always trump money.

So, if a developer wants to rezone a piece of property to put more houses on it, the elected representative will not be sympathetic because the moneyed interests have paid him off. It is not the influence of money per-se that you struggle against, it is the creative and attractive arguments that have been made by people with access to your elected officials that must be overcome. Where local anti-environmental forces are strong, the combination of political contributions and short term jobs may be so powerful that your representative will not be with you, and you must find representatives in other places who are more objective, to support you and your issue. That means getting a legislator in another place to carry your message for you.

Agencies do not, cannot and will not pursue any particular political or environmental agenda,

except to make the elected officials who control their budget and staff happy. Agencies are virtually “value free” and are delighted to do what ever their supervising agencies want them to do. That can be to cut trees or protect trees. Line managers have little or no ability to actually “stand up” against higher authorities. Picketing an agency who won’t do what you want them to is like picketing a movie theater ticket taker who won’t let you in because you can’t pay the price of admission.

Keep In Mind the Following When You Deal with Elected Representatives.

- Elected representatives’ basic grasp of the background and issues for any bad proposal is usually greatly overestimated. In general, most folks badly overestimate the knowledge, background (and courage) of their elected representative. Often legislators cast votes on issues with no knowledge that the environmental community has concerns or what they might be. Many pro-environmental votes are based strictly on the legislator’s personal concerns about the environment.
- Most attempts at lobbying by environmental organizations are very inefficient and produce very little bang for the buck.
- Elected representatives who support bad environmental activities often do so because they have been persuaded that the proposed destructive action is the best way to protect the environment, or believe they are only supporting the lesser of several evils. Many wise use representatives honestly believe they are pursuing pro-environmental policies and that our concerns are misguided, naive efforts that will actually harm the environment. Often they think local grassroots activists are brainwashed idiots in thrall to and under the spell of supercilious urban yuppies who want to destroy their way of life and lock up their neighborhood as a personal park, driving out the local folks.
- Bad projects always make some powerful local people lots of money – often millions of dollars - and when you oppose them, you will make these people absolutely furious at you and your group. They will correctly assume that your group is taking this money away from them. So it is not possible to pursue an activist agenda and not incur enmity. Consensus processes, partnerships and win-win solutions may tidy up or ameliorate a bad project, but generally will not stop it. Stopping bad projects and bad people almost always creates conflict.
- The primary obstacles to stopping any bad project are usually not agencies and developers but the members of the local environmental group who lack the stomach for confronting bad actors. No environmental organization can simultaneously fight a bad project and also fight within themselves about how not to make people mad at them.
- Generally after a project has been stopped, the rancor and animosity directed at the group will wane and eventually disappear, and the community will be happy the resource was protected.
- In the US, for projects on public land, civil disobedience and physical attempts to stop bad projects, while they may serve a variety of functions, seldom actually stop a bad proposal. They serve more to memorialize and ceremonialize losses. Protests are the absolute last resort, not the first.

Chapter 6 Use the media effectively to deliver new information to your Representative.

- To publicize your issue you need as much publicity as possible and all the news stories you can get. Newsletter editors from other organizations are always interested in copy but you should write up the piece for them and not depend on them to do original writing. There are many things you can do to make editor's jobs easier and the easier it is for them to handle your piece, the more likely they will run it.

Prepare alerts and calls to action that are "camera ready" or "ready to print as-is" in various formats. (one page, half page, and quarter page) so that whatever space is available, you have furnished just what the editor needs. Give them your copy on heavy print stock, and laser printed. If the copy calls for local officials to be contacted include those local official's phone numbers and addresses on your copy so they won't have to look them up themselves. The less work you make for an editor, the more likely they are to use your material. Increasingly editors want material via email or as email attachments.

- For public events and for general PR, if you can afford it, have a video made and send it to newspapers, other organizations, public officials, and set it out in a booth or table for public events. Sometimes it can be a fundraiser too. If you are trying to get other organizations to help, often they will show the video at their regular meetings.
- As long as the campaign is active, put letters in the newspapers from as many different people as possible, each letter raising different aspects of the issue. Keep the issue alive. In between, make calls to elected officials. And when you get someone interested in making those calls, ask them to have their spouse, parents and kids call too. Don't lose momentum - your issue needs to be constantly in front of the public.

If you get some good press or TV coverage, do not assume your representative will necessarily ever see it or become aware of it.

If you manage to get a good story written about your issue that is a good first step but only a preliminary step. You must then send it to your representative with a cover letter. If it is a TV piece, put it on video tape and send it to them. But if you do that, it is only a second step. Just because you send an article or video to a representative there is no reason to assume it will ever be seen by anyone other than the mail room, who will send you a routine response. To make sure someone in the office actually reads/views it, you must do three things.

- Call the staff person with lead responsibility for the issue and tell them an important piece has been written and you are sending it to their attention. Only then should you send it to them.
- A week later call again and ask if they received it. Since mail goes to legislative offices in hand trucks, it will probably be on the staffers desk unread. So at this second call they will probably tell you it's there but they haven't got to it yet. So you must:
- Call back a third time maybe a week later and ask them again if they have read it and at

that point you can ask them if they forwarded it to the representative. Elected representatives generally only read or become aware of material that their staff person has screened and forwarded to them, and even that screened material arrives on their desk in two foot stacks.

A misconception about TV coverage

TV coverage by itself seldom results in any concrete action.

I know of a one hour powerful documentary special on a beautiful place under threat of clearcut logging that was seen by 10 million people - that special resulted in less than thirty letters protesting the proposed destruction. TV is simply not an action media.

Have you ever watched a hard hitting expose' on TV and afterwards written a letter of complaint? Probably not. No one else does either.

People are in a trance when they watch TV and NEVER get up from their set to write letters. So while television is good for many things, it does not generally result in direct lobbying. A TV special about the wonders of a precious place under threat will generate calls and letters but they will be from RV folks who want to put it on their itinerary. The most direct concrete result of environmental pieces about a special place is to generate recreational travel to it, NOT cards and letters to save it. Paradoxically when folks see an issue on television they often assume that because the problem was on TV it is no longer a problem because everyone now knows about it. The primary value of good TV coverage is to provide hard primary lobbying material that can be reproduced as taped copies and delivered, preferably in person, to the legislator's offices to bolster a personal visit. When folks see something on TV they assume it is true

so good video can also be used as an aid to create credibility at public meetings.

On that most rare occasion when a TV viewer is motivated to pick up the phone to call an agency, the call is often of a very peculiar type. They will address their concerns in such a tentative, circular and tepid way that the agency will not even know what they really want or why they called. But if you tape a TV expose, and deliver it to a decision maker, and play it for him along with a pitch - that is action. Thus good TV coverage is a tool that can create action, but it is not action by itself.

Chapter 7 When should you form two groups (or more)?

A campaign to improve or change a project is very different from one to cancel it altogether. Don't find out six months down the road that half of your group is happy to take improvements while the other half is pushing for outright cancellation. Often it is more effective for a group to simply split into several independent parts and each concentrate on one aspect of an issue than to try to force a group to accommodate split or conflicting objectives. I have seen successful campaigns simultaneously undertaken by several different loosely coordinated groups. Some local environmental campaigns (mostly about development and sprawl) have successfully included groups as diverse as local environmentalists and wise use militia organizations.

However, if you form working alliances with extreme right wing groups, you must keep your agenda strictly focused on the specific issues you can all agree on. The trick in working with the extreme far right is that they can be very disorganized and may lack basic skills to do basic organizing. So while you may want them to help, you also do not want to teach them basic organizing skills. A genuine environmental threat to an entire community from a transnational Darth Vader may well upset the local right as much as the local environmental community. Happily, folks who may literally believe that pretty soon we will all float up to the clouds and meet Jesus when the rapture comes may also hate the idea of new condos in their neighborhood more than you do. However, if cooperating with wise use types becomes a possibility, you probably should call for advice.

Chapter 8 There are different kinds of organizers

Environmental activism is not necessarily political activism and environmental organizers are different from political organizers.

Recently I received an inquiry from a US subscriber who wrote: “Since college I’ve often wondered if I understand the meaning of the terms “political organizer”, “community organizer”, etc. Do you have working definitions? How do you know one when you meet one? (Are Political organizers)... short term, in and out, people who like to work on campaigns but not build organizations?”

Political and environmental organizing are very different and confusion about the difference is central to the ineffective way the environmental movement handles many problems. I know of one sign on letter that after a week or so had gathered perhaps two hundred signatures. If a political organizer had been given this task they would have been expected to come up with 500 or a 1000 signatures. Folks who are good at one may be wholly unsuited to do the other.

A community organizer is someone who goes into an area to help the people in the community organize to solve a problem. They usually run campaigns organized around a problem that has upset a community. Since the focus of a political or community organizer is to get the community to become organized the problem may be environmental, political, or really anything at all. When the community to be organized is workers, then you are usually talking about union organizers.

Environmental activists organize to bring awareness about an environmental issue but do not usually focus on community organizing or on politics or changing the behavior of the elected or local power holders. Instead, they focus on administrative power holders, the federal and state administrators who operate under administrative procedures, not explicitly political ones. So, since we are not a political movement, we do not address our problems politically but administratively, our target is the agency action and administrative decision makers. Moreover, most environmental activists have read little about political organizing, do not know that it is different from what they do, and haven’t the remotest knowledge of the skills required.

Political organizers (PO’s) work to build coalitions to elect officials or influence elections. They usually work directly for a political candidate for office. Some, such as the NARAL organizers work for a PAC that wants to elect somebody. Some work for issue based organizations. PO’s build the grassroots political skills and motivate people to volunteer in the direct political arena. Since environmental organizations are mostly 501c3s, not only are we not usually involved in politics, we are really forbidden to involve ourselves legally in direct politics. The success of the right is that their organizers are political organizers and their goal is elections. They run schools for organizers that turn out a lot of grassroots organizers.

PO’s move around from election to election, and just as we have a whole bag of analytical skills, so do they. Basic books on running campaigns explain field organizing, and campaign management. They will often leave a permanent infrastructure behind to work for the local candidate or party. PO’s usually are hired for a few months during campaign season, usually from about July to November in regular elections. Often political organizers start in a

specialized areas such as the coordinator of volunteers or to manage events and work up to be campaign managers.

When I supervised some political organizers once, my biggest problem was getting them to ever take time to sleep. They all worked a 15-18 hour day and none took a day off between August and November. This is not an unusual schedule for a political organizer. The environmental activist volunteers who volunteered on that campaign would come and burn out, but the political organizers would just out-work them.

During the political season political organizers spend their time doing a great variety of tasks: setting up schedules to man the county fair booths; getting together the entries for local parades; organizing fund raising events; putting up lawn signs; distributing buttons; writing ads; conducting door-to-door canvasses running phone banks, etc.

On the other hand, when the League of Conservation Voters checked the membership lists of environmental groups against county voting records, they found that about 50% of the environmental community doesn't even vote, let alone actually work in political campaigns. This is why our politicians can ignore the environmental community. As one staff person to an important legislator once said to me when asked why his member consistently ignored the environmental community:

“Fuck ‘em, they don't vote.”

Chapter 9 Ten signs of a boni-fide grassroots group

In order for an organization to effectively give or receive assistance, generally it should have evolved to the point where it has most of the following 10 things. Of course, some groups have none of them but nevertheless are effective, and some have all these things but are still ineffective.

An Effective Grassroots environmental Group generally has:

1. A clear mission and a firm commitment to a place.
2. A defined membership that pays dues. Generally a “membership” that does not pay dues is not a real membership .
3. A formal organization with named officers and a single spokesman. Any organization which lacks the capacity to select officers and the discipline to restrict itself to one public spokesman is probably just an embryonic organization.
4. A leader who was elected by a formal body that can also remove him.

Every organization is a shadow of its leader and an organization without a leader is rare. A non-accountable leader may be highly effective but always speaks only for himself.

5. Organized periodic public programs. An environmental organization without public programs probably lacks the public support necessary for continuity.
6. A periodic newsletter. An organization must have the capacity to communicate its message, accomplishments, campaigns to its members.
7. Public outreach. One cannot have serious environmentalism without serious outreach.
8. Technical capacity to perform environmental activities. Conservation is a technical process, and organizations without in-house specialists or easy access to them cannot effectively represent environmental interests.
9. A budget that raises funds internally from its members. A substantial amount of an organization's funds should come from its members and individual gifts. If an environmental organization is financially dependent on one donor or funder, then it is merely a wholly owned subsidiary of that donor and its staff are essentially the funder's employees.
10. A formal charter of incorporation, by-laws, and some arrangement for tax exempt status or a viable alternative. Lack of this may indicate that the organization is a pretend organization.

Chapter 10 Checklist for Grassroots groups to determine if you need some outside help.

- √ For your issue, do you know who owns the land, what permitting steps (choke points) you can influence, and the time lines and deadlines for the particular problems you face?
- √ Do you have local folks who are interested in working on a problem but cannot figure out how to best engage their unique talents?
- √ Do you have an organization which is divided about what to do next and how or whether to proceed?
- √ Are you faced with the need to lobby public officials, but not sure how to do this or measure the effectiveness of what you might do?
- √ Are public meetings coming up where you need to organize to get the community out to show support but you are unsure how many people you need or how to motivate them to come or even what to tell them to do?
- √ Do you need to make written or oral presentations to a public body but are unsure how to do this effectively?
- √ Do you have a problem where you need outside resources like other environmental groups or attorneys, but are not sure who your best allies might be or how to persuade them to come in and help you?
- √ Do you need to raise money for your issue and need some help with how to get grants?
- √ Do you need to attend formal meetings and negotiations with people more skillful than you and are unsure how to prepare or conduct yourself in these venues?
- √ Are you being stonewalled by local or federal agencies and are unsure what your rights to information might be and who to ask and what form your requests should take?

If you face any of these problems, do not be dismayed. They are the basic first problems that all local activists face when they start out. Most successful campaigns begin with just one person, who never was politically active before, looking at a wetland or mining proposal or proposed development and saying “they shouldn’t be doing that - should they? I wonder if there is anything I can do to stop it.”

There are sufficient laws and regulations to stop or delay almost every environmental outrage if you want to badly enough, catch it early enough, and stick with it. Every environmental outrage takes place on somebody’s land and must go through some process where you can intervene.

Note: I do not teach civil disobedience or “arrest” type strategies as they are usually unnecessary and generally only serve to memorialize defeats and seldom actually ever stop anything.

END