

THE ROLE OF NATURAL RESOURCE PROFESSIONALS IN OUTREACH EDUCATION ^{TWS}

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Most resource management professionals have a vocation rather than a job. A vocation is a rare and precious possession, but it obligates natural resource professionals to greater expectations. Our vocation demands from us that our actions truly benefit wildlife, rangelands, and other natural resources. Simply punching the clock is not enough. Our actions are more effective when we reach beyond our ranks and communicate with others who share an interest in natural resources. The size and diversity of this audience is great and ever-expanding, including youth, environmental and conservation groups, sportsmen, commodity groups, policy makers, and other concerned citizens. Natural resource professionals need to seize every opportunity to make a positive difference and relish the pleasure of talking about our favorite subject with other people. We need to share our passion for our vocation and the natural resources we love. Enthusiasm is infectious and encourages people to listen to our message. However, effective communication ultimately depends on honesty and credibility. We must try not to proselytize our audience, but instead provide people with factual information. Empowered with this knowledge, our audiences may reach the same conclusions that we have, and may eventually share our personal values and opinions about natural resources. It is imperative, however, that we recognize the values and opinions of others and try our best to understand them. This approach enables natural resource professionals to experience one of the miracles of teaching, when after the session, not only the audience knows more, but so does the speaker.