

Press Release Guide

WI Land+Water Outreach Committee

Updated July 14, 2021

Press releases (PR) are the standard way to make public announcements about events, accomplishments, grants and awards, administrative changes, or anything else that should be public knowledge. PRs are especially common for government departments and agencies since much of the annual work is required to be made available to the public.

Press releases should *not* read like a news story. The purpose is to provide all factual information about the announcement for news outlets to translate into news coverage.

Although there is a broad range of stylistic variations, a properly written press releases must include specific information. This information is important for news media to adapt a release into a story or follow up directly with the communications point of contact.

The basic elements of a press release are:

Media Contact(s) – The media contact is the author’s information, or who specifically should news outlets follow up with if they want additional information. Usually, this is either the communications director, head of the project, or the department head. It is customary to include multiple (typically up to three) media contacts when multiple organizations are involved, especially when more than one representative is quoted in the release. This can be put either at the beginning or the end of a release.

- Information to include: Name of organization, full name of contact, direct phone number, email address.

Release Directive and Date – The release’s directive signals if there is any limitation to the information provided in the release. “FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE” is the standard way to announce it is for the general public, happening now. “HOLD RELEASE UNTIL [DATE/TIME]” signals that the release should not be published until a specific date. “FOR MEDIA ONLY” is used to provide information directly to media outlets (for example, to announce that a press conference that’s only open to invited media). “FOR AGENCY ONLY” signals an internal announcement. Always include the date of the release underneath the directive.

Headline – Always include a headline at the top and use sentence case, i.e. only the first word and proper nouns are capitalized. Be sure the headline stands out from the text body (bold, enlarged font, etc.). A subheading is optional, but can help to further clarify the headline. Be sure the subheading is also a different formatting from both the body text and the headline. Only the first word of a subheading should be capitalized and neither should have punctuation.

Location – This is included right before the first sentence to immediately establish what town or city the announcement is taking place. Do not include the name of a specific place (like a building) or the state/province if that can be assumed.

First paragraph – All the important details (who, what, where, when) should be provided in the first sentence. The following 1-2 sentences should mention key elements of the “why” and “how,” to help signal the content of the announcement.

Quotes – Quotes are an especially important aspect of press releases, and unfortunately are often left out. These provide journalists with direct quotes to use in news stories. They also give the organization

that's making the announcement the opportunity to craft an eloquent statement, rather than speaking off the cuff to reporters. Quotes should always have the person's full name first, followed by their title and organization. Bolding that text improves the readability of the release for reporters looking to quickly grab a quote. Also, if there are multiple organizations involved in the announcement, be sure to ask them for quotes as well.

- Provided at the end of the full release. This is the standard way to signal the conclusion of the release. This was first used when release text was transferred directly onto a scrolling news ticker. Be sure to center them!

About section – Found at the end of the release, the “about section” provides background information about either an organization, program, or event. This is contextual, and goes just after the ###, aligned to back to the right.

Additional Links – Include additional links at the bottom, especially to websites or photo galleries.

Other Stylistic points:

- Write in the third person. Do *not* use words like “I,” “me,” or you. Instead, refer to yourself by name, as if you are talking about someone else.
- AP Style allows for sans serif fonts such as 11-point Calibri, 11-point Arial, or 10-point Lucida Sans Unicode or serif fonts such as 12-point Times New Roman, 11-point Georgia.
- Use last names to refer to people, unless it is a direct reference in a quote.
- Keep paragraphs short, between 2-4 sentences each.
- Try to keep the main information of your press release brief, between 400-600 words.
- Include seal or digital letterhead at the top, if desired.
- If the release is digital, use the title as the subject line of the email
- For digital releases, be sure to “bcc” all recipients. This is very important, as it protects the confidentiality of other people's contact information.

See below for a sample press release.

If you have additional questions, or would like assistance with writing a press release or other news story, please contact our communications manager, Kristin Teston at kristin@wisconsinlandwater.org



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
March 11, 2021

WI Land+Water goes virtual to host 68th Annual Conference *Conference features 45 virtual sessions, with over 400 attendees*

MADISON, – The Wisconsin Land and Water Conservation Association (WI Land+Water) moved online to host its 68th Annual Conference on March 2-5. The virtual event brought together more than 400 conservation professionals from various organizations across Wisconsin.

During the four-day conference, attendees were able to join a variety of virtual sessions, such as technical roundtables, conservation presentations, and multiple networking opportunities. Those attending the conference included county Land Conservation Committee (LCC) members and Land Conservation Department (LCD) staff, state and federal agency staff, and both nonprofit and industry representatives.

The conference opened with keynote speaker Jimmy Emmons, Oklahoma farmer and soil health expert. Emmons is the third generation on his family's 2,000-acre farm, and he has worked to rehabilitate the land by focusing on soil health. Over two decades ago, Emmons started no-tilling practices. As he learned more about beneficial conservation practices, he implemented the use of crop rotations, cover crops, and grazing management in order to reduce soil erosion.

"Soil is the most important thing on the planet," said Emmons. "Without it, we have nothing. Not the water that comes from it, the plants that come from it, the food." Emmons urged attendees to take advantage of new tools and technology to ensure a healthy future for our soil and our environment.

Other sessions focused on topics such as pollinator habitats, wetland mitigation practices, and Carbon Farming Programs. "We were excited to be able to recruit speakers on such a diverse mix of conservation topics," said WI Land+Water Executive Director Matt Krueger. "It provides a real benefit to our county conservation members who are dealing with these topics and more on a daily basis, at the local level."

In addition to the sessions, attendees were able to participate in the 64th Annual Conservation Awareness Poster and Speaking Contest. Students recorded and submitted their speeches prior to the

conference, and the winning speeches were available to stream during the event. For the poster contest, students' artwork was displayed online and attendees cast their votes during the conference. Poster contest winners will advance the national competition.

WI Land+Water also recognized several individuals who have made extraordinary contributions in conservation across the state. The recipients of the 2021 Conservation Awards are:

- **Greg Leonard**, Eau Claire Co. – Outstanding Employee, County Conservationist
- **Fay Amerson**, Walworth Co. – Outstanding Employee, Senior Urban Conservation Technician
- **Tracy Arnold**, Portage Co. – Brad Matson Youth Education Award
- **Dan Nankee**, Iowa Co. – Outstanding Supervisor.
- **Drew Zelle**, DATCP – Special Recognition/Friend of Conservation
- **Short Lane Ag**, *under the leadership of Matt and Craig Oehmichen* – Conservation Steward

Kevin and Carolyn Parr of Harmony Hills Farm were recognized at last year's conference as the Conservation Farm Family of the Year, and will host the 2021 Conservation Observance Day after last year's event was postponed due to COVID-19.

Even in its online setting, the conference offered numerous opportunities for attendees to connect with each other and with conference sponsors with virtual social and networking hours.

"The ability to video conference and chat with friends and colleagues in the networking room allowed for there to be somewhat of an 'in-person' feel," commented Iron County conservationist, Heather Palmquist.

Attendees were able to video chat with the conference's sponsors and partners during a dedicated Sponsor Networking Hour. "We are so grateful to our sponsors, whose support and partnership is so vital to our being able to put on a top-notch event," said Krueger.

Those sponsors and partners include:

Silver Sponsors:

- Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection
- Michael Fields Agricultural Institute
- Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)
- North Central Region SARE
- Organic Valley
- Petenwell and Castle Rock Stewards (PACRS)
- Resource Environmental Solutions
- Silt Sock Inc.
- Standards Oversight Council
- Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources

Bronze Sponsors:

- Compeer Financial
- Pfaff Public Affairs
- Professional Dairy Producers - PDPW
- Sand County Foundation

- Transcendent Technologies
- Wisconsin Farmers Union

Nonprofit Partner Sponsors

- Pheasants Forever
- River Alliance of Wisconsin
- The Nature Conservancy in Wisconsin
- Savanna Institute
- Wisconsin's Green Fire: Voices for Conservation
- UW Stevens Point - Center for Watershed Science and Education

The conference closed with the annual business meeting of WI Land+Water's members, where the organization's finances, legislative priorities, and planning initiatives were discussed.

WI Land+Water's 69th Annual Conference is scheduled for year March 2-4, 2022 at Chula Vista in Wisconsin Dells.

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***WI Land+Water** is a nonprofit organization that supports the local and statewide efforts of all county land conservation committee supervisors and conservation staff across Wisconsin. Its mission is to protect, conserve, and enhance Wisconsin's natural resources by advocating for and supporting county conservation efforts, for current and future generations.*

View the published press release [here](#).