**6 Minutes**

**for Media**

Prescribed Fire Training Exchange

Niobrara Valley Preserve, Nebraska

March 8-22, 2014

In order to have an effective interview, it is important to understand a little background about the person who is conducting it. Newspaper and broadcast (television/radio) reporters work in entirely different worlds. Print media interviews tend to provide more in-depth coverage and require more time to develop than broadcast interviews - use this to your advantage! Provide them with solid supporting information to substantiate your position and add credibility!

Television and radio interviews come in many shapes and sizes. However, the common theme among most broadcast interviews is that reporters are looking for short, concise answers - called “sound bites” - that make sense to the public and are easy to air. Be aware that most reporters are incredibly busy, and they may not be well versed in your subject matter. This is actually a good thing! It allows you to focus the conversation on your key messages (just remember to keep them short and on point).

**Preparation is Key**

* Prepare/memorize 2-3 main talking points or messages.
* Choose a person (who is serious about helping) to practice interviewing you. Select someone who will do her/his best at playing the interviewer.
* Supply the practice interviewer with your list of anticipated questions. Have the interviewer mix up the list and rephrase the questions in their own style. Instruct the interviewer to press you on those questions and to go on tangents.
* Fully answer each of the interviewer’s questions. If they become sidetracked or off-topic, try to redirect the interview back to your agenda of prioritized message points.
* Set a firm time that closely resembles the time you expect to be interviewed for the real thing.
* Practice with as many interviewers as possible.
* If you can, videotape or audiotape each interview so that you can critique your answers. Pay particular attention to how you make your main points, regardless of the questions.
* If you make an error, start over. This is also true during the actual interview.
* Work to shorten your answers. In a broadcast interview that you know will be edited, a short comment that clearly makes a point (a sound bite) is likely to be used.
* Make sure that you listen to the questions and don’t talk over the interviewer. If you do, your answer cannot be used.
* Remember: practice like you play!
* **Key Messages for the 2014 Niobrara Valley Preserve TREX:**

1. Safety is paramount.
2. **Fire training is necessary and important. This exchange fills an important role: increasing fire capacity across the U.S. at a time when this knowledge and experience is in high demand. It’s an issue most everyone can agree on, as evidenced by the numerous private and public entities that have assembled to make this happen. These include the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Bureau of Land Management, Fire Learning Network, Firestorm, Great Plains Fire Science Exchange, National Park Service, Nebraska Environmental Trust, Nebraska Forest Service, Nebraska Game and Parks Commission, Nebraska Natural Legacy Project, Niobrara Council, Pheasants Forever, The Nature Conservancy, U.S.D.A. Forest Service, and U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service.**
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, such as erosion and large numbers of dead tree skeletons standing across the landscape, are dramatic reminders of what the combination of unchecked, excessive fuel loads and drought will produce.

\*\*\*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>.