

HIP Communications Plan and Strategy

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Harvest Information Program Communications Plan

Final – March 21, 2022

Introduction

This communications plan is designed to help improve the data collected by the Harvest Information Program (HIP). Specifically, it is intended to provide strategy guidance and draft resources to the HIP Working Group and the HIP “coordinator” (the person assigned or willing to address issues to improve HIP data) in each state.

This plan contains a lot of potential strategies and tactics a state agency and its partners could implement to achieve communication objectives. We do not intend for the state HIP coordinators to implement all these tactics on their own. Ideally, HIP coordinators will work with and encourage other state agency staff and other partners (e.g., communications, licensing, social science, R3, etc.) to implement tactics that are outside their skill set and/or time limitations.

Although cooperation with others both inside and outside the agency will be necessary for effective implementation of these strategies, it is critically important for each state to assign a person as the coordinator or “champion”—to review the strategies, engage the appropriate partners to implement, and then monitor implementation and results over time.

HIP Has Serious Data Quality Problems

Although HIP certification is required by law for all migratory bird hunters in the U.S., awareness and understanding of the HIP Program is low among migratory bird hunters and other audiences. Anecdotal evidence suggests it is also low among fish and wildlife agency staff and others within the migratory bird conservation community.

This situation is complicated by the fact that, although all 49 states with migratory bird hunting seasons collect and provide HIP data to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) to provide a sampling framework for the annual migratory bird harvest survey, each state wildlife agency handles the HIP certification process independently (and potentially uniquely).

A variety of problems have been identified that severely hamper the ability of the program to achieve its objectives. A few of the more notable of these problems include:

1. Migratory bird hunters don’t know they need HIP and so they don’t get it.
2. Migratory bird hunters who seek HIP certification aren’t asked the screening questions correctly (or don’t answer the screening questions accurately or completely).
3. License vendors fail to ask hunters the HIP screening questions (they may enter false data for the hunters to speed up the licensing process at the retail counter).

4. Automated license sales systems aren't programmed correctly or mistakenly register all licenses as requiring HIP so *all* hunters receive HIP certification, even though only migratory bird hunters need HIP.
5. Automated license sales systems present the wrong screening questions, or present the screening questions incorrectly, or modify the questions so they are no longer comparable to the original questions.
6. Hunters who do not intend to hunt migratory birds mistakenly obtain HIP certification, even though they don't need it.
7. Some hunters don't understand HIP or how hunters benefit from the use of HIP information in setting hunting regulations and therefore do not answer the HIP questions accurately.
8. All of the audiences need to understand that hunters need to register for HIP in each state where they intend to harvest migratory birds.

With every problem, the error in the sample framework compounds, reducing the efficiency and accuracy of the harvest surveys, and reducing the utility and reliability of the harvest estimates.

It is critically important that all parties interested in the future of migratory bird hunting, work together to address these problems as quickly as possible.

Communicating Effectively to Solve the Problems

We recognize that communications can play a large role in addressing many of the current problems. Given the complexity of the issues and the myriad, diverse ways that state agencies are approaching HIP certification, we have developed this communications plan to provide states with an initial framework for:

1. Identifying specific target audiences and consistent communications strategies for each.
2. Sampling creative campaigns that, when tested with actual target audiences, will provide an effective, proven campaign for implementation.
3. Sampling executions of proposed campaigns that, after testing, can be adopted for consistent use by state agencies and their partners.

This effort is meant to provide a general set of communication tools to be used by states and partners in a broad campaign to achieve the objectives below.

Objectives

The objectives of this HIP Communications Plan are to:

- Increase the number/percentage of migratory bird hunters who complete the HIP certification process.
- Decrease the number/percentage of hunters who do not intend to hunt migratory birds, but who inadvertently complete HIP certification.
- Collect more complete data from the hunters who register for HIP.
- Remove impediments that prevent the previous objectives (improperly set up online licensing systems, uncooperative license vendors, etc.).

This Communication Plan has been developed in consultation with the four Flyway Councils (Atlantic, Mississippi, Central, and Pacific) and their associated technical committees. We made presentations and received suggestions from these groups during February and March 2022. The Flyway Councils are regional associations of states charged with coordinating management of migratory birds in collaboration with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The comments and suggestions of the Flyways have been incorporated into this Plan.

Audiences

HIP registration is used to identify the pool of migratory game bird hunters in order to draw a statistically valid sample for the subsequent harvest survey. Registering hunters and correctly placing them into the proper strata presents several complicated issues, and the resolutions to these issues require actions by several audiences. In some states or situations, different audiences will be much more important than they are in other states or situations. We have divided this plan into separate sections for each audience so that state agencies (and partners) can easily concentrate their effort where they feel it will have the most impact. In general, we consider hunters to be the primary audiences, but we encourage all users to consider situations where effective communications with a secondary audience might have greater impact on hunters in the long run. Some of these situations are described below.

Primary Audiences

- Migratory Game Bird Hunters – The top priority is for hunters who intend to hunt migratory birds to register for HIP and to answer the screening questions completely and accurately.
- Those who do not hunt migratory birds – When a hunter who does NOT intend to hunt migratory birds completes the HIP registration process, this reduces the effectiveness of the HIP screening process. Preventing these “accidental” HIP registrations would go a long way to providing the USFWS with more accurate HIP data.

Secondary Audiences

- License Software Providers & Agency Licensing Staff – As the majority of license sales shifts from retail to online, the individuals who design and administer the online license purchase process have the potential to greatly impact how hunters encounter and understand HIP, and how they answer the questions required for certification.
- State Fish and Wildlife Agency Staff – The state fish and wildlife agency employees who are not directly involved in the collection or use of HIP data (conservation officers, receptionists, etc.) are an important audience. A confused hunter might ask a conservation officer or the clerk at a fish and wildlife office to explain HIP or why they need to register. States need to keep these staff members informed so the entire agency presents a united, informed front on this issue.
- License Retailers – License retailers are an important part of the license sales system. If the sporting goods store clerks selling licenses don't take time to ask the HIP questions or don't give hunters enough time to answer them accurately, the entire system breaks down.

Campaign Creative

There are a lot of moving parts involved in the HIP registration issues, and because each state has its own system of collection, states will not all have the same problems. To address this, we have developed several draft creative concepts for the campaign. They are targeted at different types of hunters, and they leverage different motivations and calls-to-action depending on the issues they address.

Ultimately, these concepts will need to be tested with actual hunters to determine which will be the most effective. The draft concepts are presented and briefly outlined here, along with an examination of the potential pros and cons of each.

Concept: Don't Skip HIP

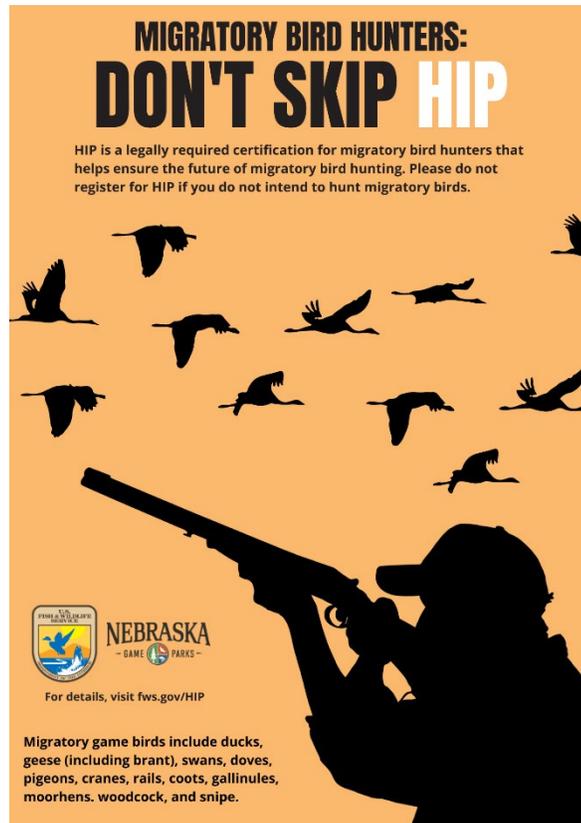
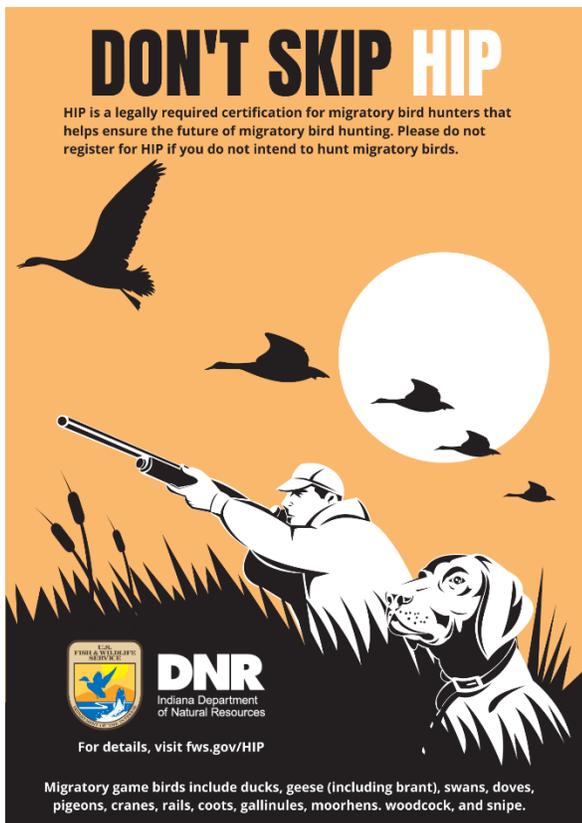
Headline: Don't Skip HIP

Text: HIP is a legally required certification for migratory bird hunters that helps ensure the future of migratory bird hunting. Please do not register for HIP if you do not intend to hunt migratory birds.

Reasoning: This is the most simple and straightforward concept, using the "Don't Skip HIP" phrasing. To make it clearer that only migratory bird hunters should register for HIP, adding the "Migratory Bird Hunters" tag at the top helps the message. Images of different species of migratory birds can be used to cover the wide range of huntable species. The text is straightforward and simple enough to get the main idea of HIP across without going into complicated aspects that would confuse the viewer. The USFWS and state logos give credibility to the message.

Pros and Cons of this concept:

- Focuses on migratory bird hunters over non-migratory bird hunters.
- Easy to understand.
- Works well in B&W.
- Works well in print and online.
- Could work well for video if paired with hunting footage.
- Easy to swap species to customize the usage.



Concept: HIP/Not HIP

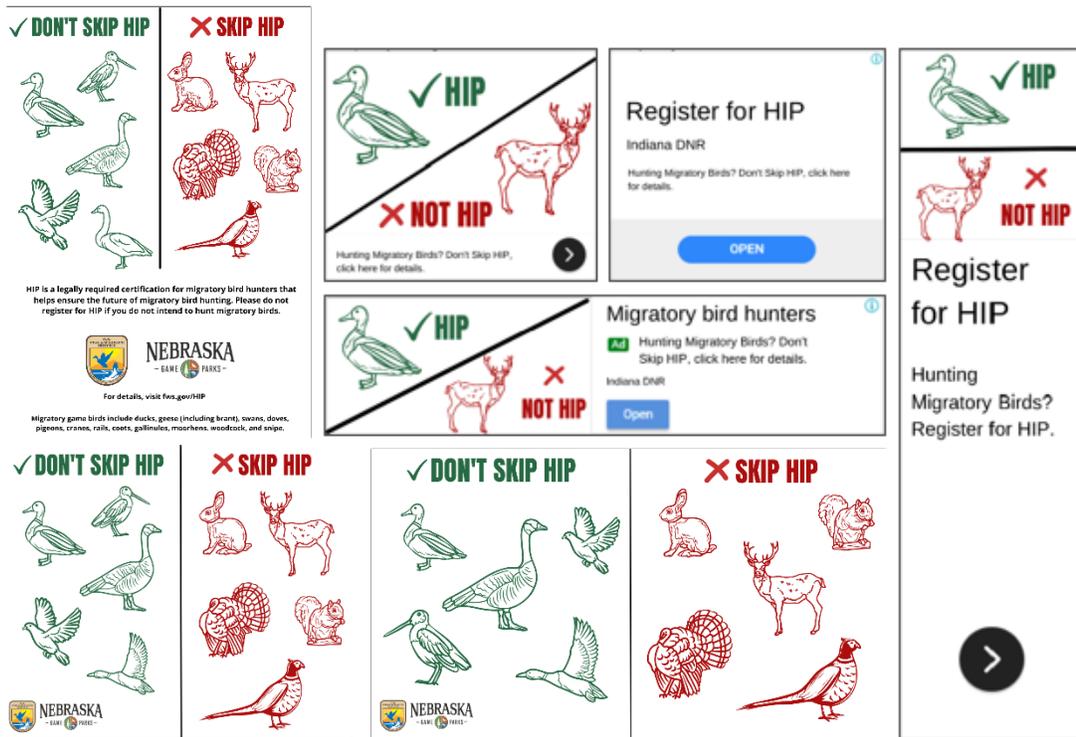
Headline: Don't skip HIP/Skip HIP

Text: HIP is a legally required certification for migratory bird hunters that helps ensure the future of migratory bird hunting. Please do not register for HIP if you do not intend to hunt migratory birds.

Reasoning: This concept can be targeted to migratory bird hunters as well as non-migratory bird hunters. The message is clear in that those who hunt only species like deer, turkey, rabbit, pheasants, etc. are not required to register for HIP, while those who hunt migratory birds like ducks, geese, and doves are required to register. The text is straightforward and simple enough to get the message across without being too complicated.

Pros and Cons of this concept:

- Works for migratory bird & non-migratory bird hunters.
- Easy to understand.
- Works well in B&W.
- Works well in print and online.
- A series of still pictures creates less costly video.
- Can focus on multiple species at once.



Concept: Certifiably HIP

Headline: Are you Certifiably HIP?

Text: HIP is a legally required certification for migratory bird hunters that helps ensure the future of migratory bird hunting. Please do not register for HIP if you do not intend to hunt migratory birds.

Reasoning: This fun concept catches the viewer's attention while driving home the point that HIP is legally required if you intend to hunt migratory birds like ducks. The species can be switched out for other migratory birds as well. This message focuses on the legal aspect of HIP, but in a way that is less intimidating and more eye-catching.

Pros and Cons of this concept:

- Focuses on migratory bird hunters over non-migratory bird hunters.
- Easy to understand.
- Slightly stronger in color.
- Works well in print and online.
- Video would require animation.
- Modifiable to focus on various species.
- Some states expressed concerns about using cartoon figures in lieu of actual animal images.

The image displays five variations of a digital advertisement for 'Certifiably HIP'. Each ad features two cartoon ducks, one green and one brown, both wearing sunglasses and holding a boombox. The text and layout vary across the versions:

- Top Left:** Large headline 'ARE YOU CERTIFIABLY HIP?' in blue and orange. Below the ducks is a small text block: 'HIP is a legally required certification for migratory bird hunters that helps ensure the future of migratory bird hunting. Please do not register for HIP if you do not intend to hunt migratory birds.' Below that is the Nebraska Game and Parks logo and the text 'For details, visit fws.gov/HIP'. At the bottom, it lists migratory game birds: 'Migratory game birds include ducks, geese (including brant), swans, doves, pigeons, cranes, rails, coots, gallinules, moorhens, woodcock, and snipe.'
- Top Middle:** A smaller version of the ducks and boombox. Below them is the text 'Are you certifiably HIP? Click here for details on how to register for HIP.' with a right-pointing arrow.
- Top Right:** A white card with the headline 'Register for HIP' and 'Indiana DNR'. Below is the text 'Are you certifiably HIP? Click here for details on how to get registered.' and a blue 'OPEN' button.
- Middle Left:** Similar to the top middle version, but with the headline 'Migratory bird hunters' and 'Indiana DNR'. Below is the text 'Are you certifiably HIP? Click here for details on how to get registered.' and a blue 'Open' button.
- Bottom Left:** A smaller version of the ducks and boombox. Below them is the Nebraska Game and Parks logo.
- Bottom Middle:** A large version of the ducks and boombox. Below them is the headline 'ARE YOU CERTIFIABLY HIP?' in large blue and orange letters. At the bottom right is the Nebraska Game and Parks logo.
- Bottom Right:** A white card with the headline 'Certified HIP?' and 'Are you certifiably HIP? Click here for details on getting HIP registered.' Below the text is a large black circle containing a white right-pointing arrow.

Concept: Camo Sam

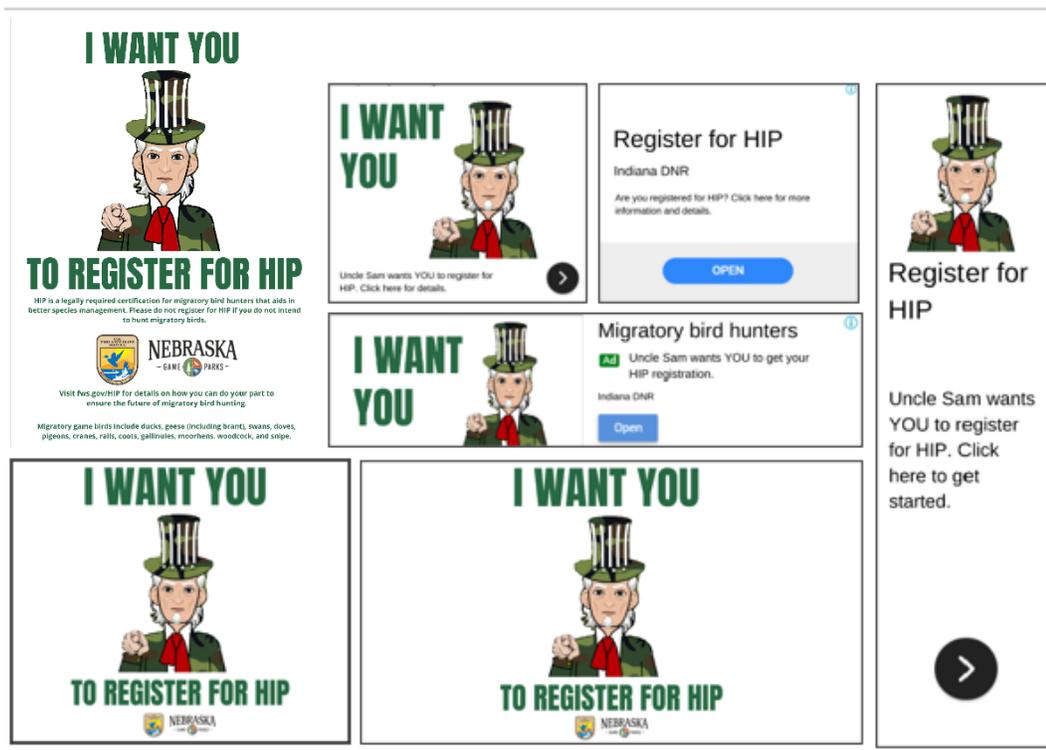
Headline: I WANT YOU (to register for HIP)

Text: HIP is a legally required certification for migratory bird hunters that helps ensure the future of migratory bird hunting. Please do not register for HIP if you do not intend to hunt migratory birds.

Reasoning: Because HIP is legally required for all migratory bird hunters, it is important that they are aware of the program as well as the fact that it helps to achieve better species management. This concept using Uncle Sam, alludes to the legality of HIP and encourages people to tap into their community instincts and help “do their part” for wildlife conservation.

Pros and Cons of this concept:

- Might cause non-migratory bird hunters to register.
- Easy to understand.
- Slightly stronger in color.
- Works well in print and online.
- Video would require animation.
- Modifiable to focus on various species.



Concept: It's the Law!

Headline: HIP Certification, It's the Law!

Text: HIP is a legally required certification for migratory bird hunters that helps ensure the future of migratory bird hunting. Please do not register for HIP if you do not intend to hunt migratory birds.

Reasoning: This concept focuses on the point that HIP is a legally required certification, while taking the edge off the law enforcement approach with a fun image. The text is simple and straightforward, which avoids over-complicating the subject.

Pros and Cons of the concept:

- Focuses on migratory bird hunters over non-migratory bird hunters.
- Easy to understand.
- Slightly stronger in color.
- Works well in print and online.
- Video would require animation.
- Modifiable to focus on various species.
- Some states expressed concerns about using cartoon figures in lieu of actual animal images.



Concept: Duck Butt

Headline: Don't be a...

Text: HIP is a legally required certification for migratory bird hunters that helps ensure the future of migratory bird hunting. Please do not register for HIP if you do not intend to hunt migratory birds.

Reasoning: This concept is built around imagery and humor designed to attract attention and be memorable to the viewer. It can be used with multiple different species. The text is simple and straightforward, which avoids over-complicating the subject.

Pros and Cons of the concept:

- Stronger for waterfowl hunters.
- Slightly stronger in color.
- Works well in print and online.
- Could work well with video if paired with bobbing bird footage.
- Gets stronger as more species are added to the campaign.
- Some states might find this concept inappropriate for usage.

DON'T BE A



REGISTER FOR HIP

HIP is a legally required certification for migratory bird hunters that helps ensure the future of migratory bird hunting. Please do not register for HIP if you do not intend to hunt migratory birds.

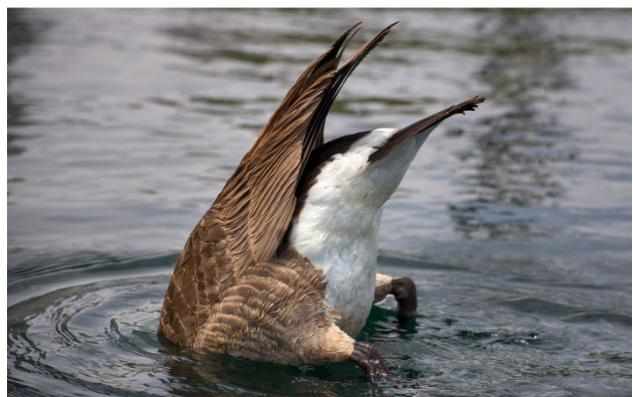


NEBRASKA
- GAME PARKS -

For details, visit fws.gov/HIP

Migratory game birds include ducks, geese (including brant), swans, doves, pigeons, cranes, rails, coots, gallinules, moorhens, woodcock, and snipe.

DON'T BE A



REGISTER FOR HIP

HIP is a legally required certification for migratory bird hunters that helps ensure the future of migratory bird hunting. Please do not register for HIP if you do not intend to hunt migratory birds.



NEBRASKA
- GAME PARKS -

For details, visit fws.gov/HIP

Migratory game birds include ducks, geese (including brant), swans, doves, pigeons, cranes, rails, coots, gallinules, moorhens, woodcock, and snipe.

Concept: Don't Register for HIP

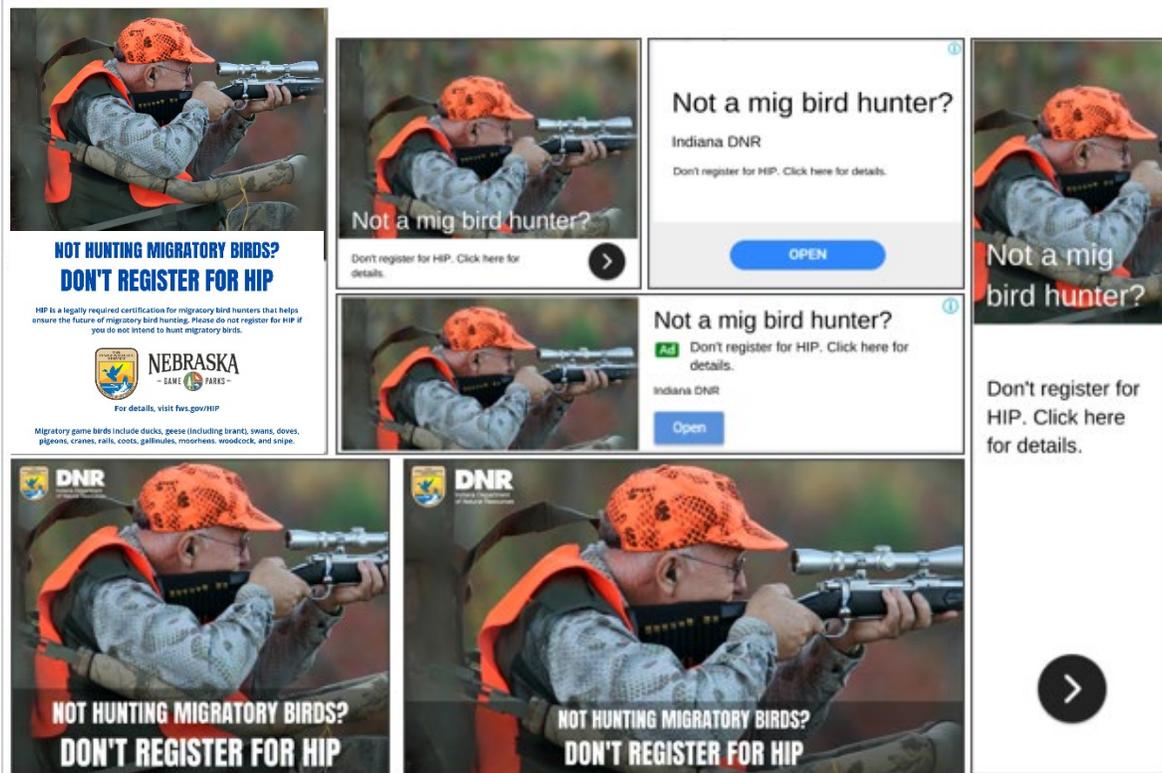
Headline: Not hunting for Migratory Birds?

Text: HIP is a legally required certification for migratory bird hunters that helps ensure the future of migratory bird hunting. But it is not required for other kinds of hunting. Please do not register for HIP if you do not intend to hunt migratory birds.

Reasoning: This concept is geared towards non-migratory bird hunters. The image can be replaced by photos of other types of hunting. The message is meant to be simple and easy to understand, in order to address one of the biggest problems with HIP registration (as stated by the Fish and Wildlife Service): that non-migratory bird hunters are still registering when they shouldn't be, and thus are causing inaccurate data.

Pros and Cons of this concept:

- Stronger for non-migratory bird hunters.
- Easy to understand.
- Slightly stronger in color.
- Works well in print and online.
- Video would require hunter footage.
- Gets stronger as more types of hunting are added to the campaign.
- Might confuse hunters or send message discouraging hunting.



Testing the Concepts

The draft concepts above were created based on communication theory, limited previous research with hunter audiences, and knowledge of message and advertisement effectiveness with the hunting community.

However, these particular messages have not been tested with actual target audiences, so it is impossible to know how they will “play” with real hunters.

We highly recommend testing these concepts to determine actual effectiveness. We recommend conducting at least two focus groups of hunters (one with migratory bird hunters and one with “other” hunters) in each flyway to gather opinions and ideas directly from hunters. Hunters recruited for the focus groups should be diverse across gender, age, hunting experience, species hunted, etc.

Based on feedback from the Flyway Councils, we believe a few new concepts should be added prior to testing. These concepts include, but are not limited to:

- A concept that encourages migratory bird hunters to fully and accurately complete the registration process. (This concept would be aimed at states where migratory bird hunters (or their vendors) are registering for HIP but are entering “nonsense data” like 1-1-1-1 or A-B-C-D in the fields simply to complete the process as fast as possible.)
- A concept aimed specifically at dove hunters (for states where waterfowl hunters are registering but dove hunters are not).
- A concept that explains which birds are migratory gamebirds.

The best concept or concepts will encourage migratory bird hunters to register for HIP without encouraging other hunters to register in error. The campaign(s) that work best with target audiences will be included in the toolkit for implementation by the states and their partners. It is important that these concepts are tested across the demographic diversity of hunters to ensure effectiveness.

Toolkit

Toolkit of Customizable Messages

Once market testing determines what concept or concepts are most effective for the audience, those concepts will be produced in a variety of shapes, sizes, and formats and made available to state agencies for download. All the message formats will be produced in InDesign and will be fully editable.

We recommend states add their agency logos and revise the vocabulary in the messages to match whatever they typically use. For instance, different states refer to the HIP privilege as a stamp, license, permit, registration, certification, or some other term. Using the same terms in messages that your hunters are accustomed to seeing in your regulations book, website, and hunter ed classes will make it easier for them to understand your messages and behave as you would like.

Strategies and Tactics

Levels of Communication

Some communication strategies are too large for individual states to implement—at least not very often; for example, placing a story in *Field and Stream* Magazine or creating partnerships with national retailers or NGOs. While it is not impossible for an individual state to accomplish these types of things, success is much more likely on the regional or national scale. Therefore, we have separated the communications tactics for each audience into two sections:

- **National** – These communications tactics aren't well suited to the state level. They are better served when there is a central entity to coordinate them. The Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies' HIP Working Group (HIP WG) is one entity that could play this central coordination role. The HIP WG would execute some tactics itself and coordinate other national and state partners to implement others.
- **State** – These tactics are executable at the state level. They are lower in cost/effort and can be geographically controlled to prevent one state's efforts from interfering with another's. While the HIP coordinator in each state would be the driving force in these efforts, we recommend they work with other departments in their agency (communications, licensing, etc.) for implementation.

Audience 1: Hunters

Hunters: Objectives

- Increase understanding of the HIP registration process
- Increase the percentage of migratory bird hunters completing the HIP registration process
- Decrease the percentage of hunters who do not intend to hunt for migratory birds who complete HIP certification
- Increase the completeness of data that migratory bird hunters provide during HIP registration

Evaluation – Communication efforts need to be evaluated for effectiveness and efficiency.

- **Increase understanding of the HIP registration process** – One way to measure hunter understanding of HIP is with surveys. If you are already doing a migratory bird harvest survey, one option could be to add a question about HIP understanding. Another option for measuring hunter understanding is to use administrative data. Below we provide options for evaluation using administrative data where available.
- **Increase the percentage of migratory bird hunters completing the HIP registration process** – This objective will be relatively easy to evaluate if your state requires a state-level permit/stamp for migratory bird hunters. Compare the number of migratory bird hunters who completed HIP the year before implementing the effort, to the number who completed it the year after. An increase indicates success.
- **Decrease the number of hunters who do not intend to hunt for migratory birds who complete HIP certification** – This objective is the exact opposite of the previous objective, but will again be fairly simple if your state requires a state level permit/stamp for migratory bird hunters. This time you'll want to compare the number of hunters who did not purchase a state migratory bird permit/stamp who completed HIP registration the year before implementing the effort, to the number who did not purchase a state migratory bird permit/stamp (who completed HIP) the year after. This time a decrease indicates success.
- **Number of HIP registrations approaches number of migratory bird hunting permits.** If the number of HIP registrations come close to the number of migratory bird hunters then registration levels are improving.
- **Increase the completeness of data that migratory bird hunters provide during HIP registration** – This analysis will require reviewing HIP registrations in your state (could be all of them or a random sample of registrations large enough to be statistically significant—perhaps in a pilot area). The goal would be migratory bird hunters who complete their HIP registrations answering all questions (including contact information) with meaningful data.

Success in this objective is an increase in the percentage of complete responses. Percentages are a better measure of this objective than absolute counts as percentages will account for increases and decreases in the numbers of migratory bird hunters.

Hunter: Messaging

Key Message: HIP is a legally required certification for migratory bird hunters that provides important data to ensure the future of migratory bird hunting. For details visit: fws.gov/HIP. Please do not register for HIP if you do not intend to hunt migratory birds.

Talking Points:

- If you hunt migratory birds (see list below), you are required by law to obtain HIP certification.
- If you do not hunt migratory birds (see list below) please DO NOT register for HIP certification.
- HIP (The Harvest Information Program) allows biologists to estimate how many migratory birds (ducks, geese, doves, etc.) hunters harvest each year.
- Harvest estimates are critically important for ensuring the health of bird populations and future hunting seasons.
- Obtaining HIP certification simply requires you to answer a few short questions about your hunting activity.
- Answering the HIP questions truthfully and accurately helps ensure the future of migratory bird hunting.
- Migratory bird hunters need to obtain HIP registration in each state where they intend to hunt migratory birds.
- HIP is a cooperative effort between state fish and wildlife agencies and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.
- The USFWS will select a small percentage of HIP registrants to complete a migratory bird harvest survey that year.
- List of migratory game birds:
 - Ducks
 - Geese (including brant)
 - Swans
 - Doves and pigeons
 - Cranes
 - Rails
 - Coots
 - Gallinules and moorhens
 - Woodcock and snipe

Hunter: Communication Tactics

National Tactics: Implemented or coordinated by AFWA HIP Working Group

National Hunting Media – The most efficient method of reaching hunters all over the country is hunting media designed for that purpose. Below are just a few examples of such media outlets. They are examples, not recommendations. An analysis of the reach, cost, and content quality of any media outlet should be completed before specific magazines, broadcasts, and websites can be recommended.

Here are a few examples:

- Field and Stream
- Bowhunter (non-migratory bird hunter messages only)
- Shooting Sportsman
- Traditional Bowhunter (non-migratory bird hunter messages only)
- Hunting
- Outdoor Life
- Deer & Deer Hunting (non-migratory bird hunter messages only)
- Waterfowler
- Waterfowl
- Traditions Waterfowl

Assuming the budget is not often available to buy ads in national publications, there are two other potential tactics that are no/low cost:

- **Public Service Announcements** – Because the action you are asking people to take (accurate HIP registration) is pro-conservation and for the public good, you can ask media outlets to run your messages as public service announcements.
- **Public Relations** – You could provide stories to national media outlets explaining the importance of HIP and showing hunters the benefits of registering properly.

Migratory Bird NGOs – Ducks Unlimited, Delta Waterfowl, and other membership-style NGOs are ideal channels to reach out to migratory bird hunters. They operate popular websites, magazines, newsletters, and more; all of which are ideal for carrying the HIP message.

Assuming the budget is not often available to buy ads in NGO media, there are two other potential tactics that are no/low cost:

- **Public Service Announcements** – Because the action you are asking people to take (accurate HIP registration) is pro-conservation and for the public good you can ask NGO websites and magazines to run your messages as public service announcements.
- **Public Relations** – You could provide stories to these media outlets explaining the importance of HIP and showing hunters the benefits of registering properly.

Hunting Retailers – National retailers like Bass Pro Shops, Scheels, Gander Outdoors, etc., are constantly in communication with hunters, both in their stores and via the internet, advertising, and direct mail. HIP registration is good for migratory bird conservation, which is good for hunting and ultimately good for their business. Partnerships with such organizations could provide a variety of communications channels:

- **In-store posters** – Posters in changing rooms, near cash registers, or anywhere else in a hunting retail outlet are ideal. You could provide the posters (or ask the partner to develop them) and include the retail partner’s logo with HIP messaging.
- **Websites, social media, email** – National retailers have entire departments dedicated to generating online content. You could approach such organizations and appeal to them to include HIP registration in their online content.
- **Newsletters, Circulars, Catalogs** – National retailers produce and distribute mountains of printed material about hunting and hunting gear. Retail partners could include a HIP message in their print materials.

State Tactics: implemented by HIP coordinator with help from relevant agency staff

Communication Tactics

There are a variety of methods for communicating with hunters. The following tactics are listed in a generally descending order of priority. That is, the early tactics require the least effort (cost) for the results they are likely to achieve. The later tactics will likely be effective, but they require more effort/cost.

1. Licensing Software
2. Hunter Ed
3. State Owned Media
4. Social Media
5. Retailers
6. NGOs
7. YouTube
8. Online Advertising
9. Traditional Media

Each tactic is covered in detail on the following pages. If you have a shortage of time or funds, invest your resources in numerical order.

Tactic 1: Online Licensing System – For many states, the most important and effective way the agency can improve the quantity and quality of proper HIP certification data is by clarifying their online licensing/registration processes to encourage migratory bird hunters to register for the HIP and to discourage those who do not intend to hunt for migratory birds. Sometimes this requires coordination with an online license system vendor.

Tactic 2: New Hunter Training Programs – It’s almost always easier to create a correct behavior than to correct a bad habit. New hunter training programs are a perfect opportunity to get your state’s new hunters started off right with HIP certification. Depending on the material being presented, instructors could encourage or discourage HIP registration and explain the importance of the HIP Program.

- Hunter Education classes
- Migratory Bird R3 efforts
- Non-Migratory Bird R3 Efforts
- Mentored Youth programs

Tactic 3: State “owned” Opportunities – Every state fish and wildlife agency has a suite of communications tools inhouse that won’t add additional costs for the agency anything more than the time and effort to utilize them. These tools should be every agency’s daily go-to’s. Information about HIP certification is the kind of messaging that will have to “fight hard” to make it through the clutter of a thousand other messages, so agencies should never miss an opportunity to use its tools to carry the message.

- **Email Blasts** – Targeted email blasts are probably the best internal communications tool to encourage proper HIP registration. The key is pulling very precise lists and sending them specific messages. Here are some examples:

List	Message
Purchasers of State Duck Stamp	Be sure to register for HIP Certification
Purchasers of deer tags	Please don’t register for HIP Certification if you will not be hunting migratory birds
Small Game License Buyers	Do you need to register for HIP Certification? Here’s when.

Agencies must be careful not to overuse this powerful channel. Too many emails will cause your constituents to stop opening emails from your agency. However, you can piggyback HIP messaging onto a variety of other related posts, which continues to reinforce the messages without irritating your constituents.

- **Regulations books and websites** – whether a state publishes a printed book, posts a PDF online, or posts its regulations as web content, where better to explain a regulation than in a regulations book? But don’t count on a couple sentences buried in pages and pages of text; rather, make it stand out. Consider giving the topic a page of its own with an interesting headline or a graphic or adding one of the ads from this plan. Research shows

migratory bird hunters are much more likely to comply with HIP when they understand what the program is and how it benefits them. The trick is putting the information in front of them in an interesting and engaging way.

- **Websites** – Your agency website is much like your regulations book. Many of your state’s hunters will never touch a paper regulations book and instead use your website. Feature one of the HIP ads provided in this plan on the appropriate sections of your website just like you would in your regs book.

Your website offers one other opportunity. You can create a dedicated HIP landing page that tells the HIP story all in one place. Then you can link that page to all the locations on your website that you feel viewers need a better understanding of HIP. This HIP landing page can also serve as the landing page for digital ads, social media posts, etc.

Tactic 4: Social Media – Social media is an inexpensive and efficient means of reaching individuals with specific interests. And as a bonus, many states already have social media pages focused on hunting-related content.

- **Posts** – Post are the easiest and least expensive means of reaching social media users. It is best to keep hunting-related posts limited to pages or accounts that are dedicated to hunting-related content. The HIP-related images and posters in the Toolkit can be easily adopted and modified for use by your social media staff. HIP-related content could be used either to encourage migratory bird hunters to register or to discourage other hunters from registering in error.
- **Boosted Posts** – For a fee, many social media channels will allow you to boost a post. Boosting a post will make it visible to individuals who are similar to your followers, but who do not currently follow your page. This is a great way to extend the use of a post that was successful with your traditional audience, to a new audience.
- **Advertising** – Most social media channels offer the ability to make paid posts and/or advertising. Paid social media exposure obviously requires an investment, but it does allow you to put your message in front of new audiences. Because social media companies know so much about their users, paid social media is often an excellent way to get in front of a focused audience like hunters or even specific kinds of hunters.

For more information on social media strategy and tactics, see Appendix A: Social Media Usage Guide.

Tactic 5: Hunting Retailers – Hunting retailers are an ideal means of reaching migratory bird hunters. Hunters buy gear, ammunition, and licenses from these retailers and many pop in occasionally just to kill a little time or talk about hunting or the latest gear.

There are two primary opportunities states can use to reach hunters via local or even national hunting retailers:

- **Print Materials** – Posters in changing rooms, near cash registers, on the bulletin board, or anywhere else in a hunting retail store are ideal. The state could provide the posters (or ask a partner to develop them) and include the partner’s logo with HIP messaging. Some retailers might even be willing to put a stack of brochures by the cash register. It never hurts to ask.
- **Clerks** – The staff at the local sporting goods store is a huge source of information for local hunters. Taking the time to explain HIP to a handful of employees in a sporting goods store can provide correct information to hundreds of their customers. It takes a lot of time and effort to create and maintain relationships like this, but it can pay big dividends way beyond improving the quality of the HIP data.

In many states, license retailers have a contractual relationship with the agency and are managed by contracting staff. Since these retailers have an obligation to complete the HIP process for license buyers who need it, contacting their staff is an excellent way to deliver that message. In addition, look for opportunities to combine this with other similar efforts, such as if your agency conducts hunter education courses or workshops, cooking demos, etc., at local retailers. Make a list of agency staff who have relationships with retailers and ensure they understand the HIP Program so they can encourage their retailers to assist with carrying the message.

Tactic 6: Migratory Bird NGO Local Chapters – Local chapters of Ducks Unlimited, Delta Waterfowl, and other membership-style NGOs are ideal channels to reach out to local migratory bird hunters. They operate popular websites, social media, newsletters, and local events, all of which are natural vehicles for the HIP message.

- **Advertising** – Local chapter newsletters and other advertising/sponsorship opportunities are often very affordable and an efficient way to reach out to migratory bird hunters.
- **Public Service Announcements** – Because the action you are asking people to take (accurate HIP registration) is pro-conservation and for the public good you can ask local chapters to run your messages as public service announcements.
- **Public Relations** – Small organizations are often searching for social media and newsletter content. Providing HIP registration stories to these local chapters is a win-win proposition. They gain content and the HIP message is delivered to their members in a channel they trust.
- **Events** – Events are the lifeblood of the local chapter system. They provide membership value, community, and fundraising. States could capitalize on these events. Send a HIP booth to the outdoor expo. Hang posters in the meeting venue. Provide prizes and/or sponsorships that come with an opportunity to deliver the HIP message to the audience.

Tactic 7: YouTube – YouTube has become the de-facto way to learn about nearly every outdoor skill or activity. New and aspiring hunters, as well as experienced hunters, watch YouTube videos to learn about techniques and gear, or just for fun. Because of YouTube’s popularity with hunters and its use as a credible source of information, it is an ideal media channel for the HIP message.

- **Post Videos** – The least expensive and least complicated way to get a message onto YouTube is simply to make a short video and post it. You don’t need a video production crew or a big budget. An average smartphone or camera is enough equipment to make a successful YouTube video. There are three keys to making an inexpensive, successful YouTube video:
 - **Keep it brief.** Deliver your message concisely and stop.
 - **Keep it informative.** Make sure your video tells the viewer something they will find useful. (Not just something they can do for YOU.)
 - **Make it relevant.** Make your video relevant to the audience. That may require making multiple versions of the same video targeting different audiences. Here is an example:
 - Why every DUCK HUNTER needs to register for HIP certification
 - Why every DOVE HUNTER needs to register for HIP certification
 - Why DEER HUNTERS should not register for HIP certification
- **Influencers** – Influencers are social media personalities, often with knowledge of a specific topic, that use YouTube and other social media platforms to gather followers by posting useful and/or amusing content. Some influencers make social media their career by ad revenue-sharing agreements with social media platforms, selling sponsorships on their own, or soliciting donations from their viewers.

For the purposes of HIP registration, it is best to consider working with influencers as a public relations tactic, and catering to the fact that most of their content is video. So instead of sending a press release and a photo to a magazine, you might send a cover letter and a T-shirt, hat, or poster to an influencer. In the cover letter, explain the situation and why it is important that migratory bird hunters register for HIP, and give them a SHORT message that they could share with their followers. Then ask them if they would wear the T-shirt during their next video shoot and briefly recommend to their audience that they register for HIP.

The best way to find influencers is to sit down at the computer, pull up YouTube, and search for videos that the audience you want to speak to, might watch. Maybe things such as:

- Duck hunting in [state]
- Getting started dove hunting in [state]
- Inexpensive goose decoys

When you find a YouTuber whose style and content appeal to you, click on the name of the producer and look for their contact information or their website. If they don’t share that

information, use the YouTube comment feature to ask them for it.

Below are just a few examples of migratory bird hunting YouTube channels. They are examples, not recommendations. Each state will need to find influencers that match the species, hunting styles, and other attributes the state wants to include in its messages, and influencers the state believes will succeed in promoting those messages.

- Federal Premium's Black Cloud – With Mr. Duck
 - Freelance Duck Hunting
 - Tony Vandemore
 - Dive Bomb Industries
 - Fowled Reality Duck and Goose Hunting
- **Advertising** – Advertising on YouTube is the least time consuming (and most expensive) way to use YouTube to get your message in front of YouTube viewers. With advertising, your message is not in the YouTube video, but in the commercial that runs before (or during) that video.

The cheapest YouTube ads allow the viewer to skip the ad after five seconds. If you choose that ad format, be sure to make the first five seconds of your ad good enough to entice viewers to stay. If you can't do that, you might want to pay extra for the option that forces viewers to watch your entire ad.

YouTube's advertising tools will allow you to target a specific geography (your state) and to select the type of content on which you want your ad to run (hunting, duck hunting, crane hunting, etc.).

For more information on YouTube strategy and tactics, see Appendix A: YouTube Usage Guide.

Tactic 8: Google Ads (and Other Online Advertising) – The internet has revolutionized advertising. Properly used, internet advertising can be placed in front of very specifically defined audiences and track the actions they take after seeing a message. And on top of all that, it offers very precise budget control and nearly immediate feedback. Because of all these benefits, online advertising offers state fish and wildlife agencies new advertising opportunities they've never had before.

There are many vendors of online advertising. Some websites sell ads on their sites directly. This is especially true of websites that are affiliated with magazines, television shows, and other media outlets. Others use networks like Google Ads to place ads on their sites. For the sake of this strategy, we will discuss the advertising options available through Google, the largest online advertising network.

Most online advertising services offer monthly, weekly, or even daily budget controls so that you can manage your budget fairly precisely.

- **Search Advertising** – Online search advertising places text ads in front of individuals who have searched for specific words. It's an ideal way to get the HIP message in front of people who are searching for information on migratory bird hunting. It can be targeted to a specific geography (your state) and can be set up with separate keywords for every species of migratory bird common in your state.

You could create two text ads, one with legal requirements and one with a conservation message, and the system will use both ads to start, but will maximize the click-through rates by eventually only using the most popular ad. Ads could use headlines like:

- Every goose hunter needs to register for HIP
 - Crane Hunters are required to register for HIP
 - Your HIP registration protects the future of dove hunting
- **Content Driven Ad Placements** – Content driven ad placements place ads with images in specific kinds of content that you determine. It can also be targeted to your state only. Google Ads will build you ads for you. You upload images and logos and answer a few simple questions, and the system will develop a series of ads for you in the various necessary sizes and shapes.

You can select content in two ways:

- **Specific websites/topics** – Google Ads offers an extensive network of websites covering a variety of topics. You can select all the topics you are interested in, and your ads will automatically appear on those websites. You would use this system to target sites about hunting or more specialty migratory bird hunting.
- **Specific content** – You can use keywords to define the sort of content you would like your ad to appear in, and then your ads will appear on pages that use those words, regardless of the subject matter. This approach could put your ad on an article about duck hunting on a website dedicated to parenting or men's fitness.

You can use either of these approaches or both. It all depends on the type of people you are trying to reach and the messages you are using.

Tactic 9: Regional/Local Hunting Media – The most efficient method of reaching hunters all over your state/region is hunting media designed to do just that. Here are a few examples:

- Ohio Outdoors
- Northern Arizona Hunting
- Florida Game & Fish
- New York Antler Outdoors

If the budget is not available to place paid ads in these kinds of publications, there are two other potential tactics to consider:

- **Public Service Announcements** – Because the action you are asking people to take (accurate HIP registration) is pro-conservation and for the public good, you can ask media outlets to run your messages as public service announcements.
- **Public Relations** – You could also provide stories to these media outlets explaining the importance of HIP and asking their readers to register properly.

Audience 2: License Software Providers/Licensing Staff

License Software Providers/Licensing Staff: Objectives

- Increase understanding of the HIP registration process
- Implement effective HIP registration in the online hunting licensing systems in all 49 states that offer migratory bird hunting

Evaluation – Because this audience is part of the system that collects the HIP registrations, state agencies should consider switching from the typical measurement of outputs to the measurement of inputs. While improving understanding is part of the process with this audience, the only real measure of success is the implementation of an online licensing system that collects complete and/or appropriate HIP registrations from migratory bird hunters and plainly discourages those who do not hunt migratory birds from registering.

- **Implement effective HIP registration in the online licensing systems of all 49 states that offer migratory bird hunting** – The best measurement of success with this audience is the number of states that have a clean, effective system in place.

License Software Providers/Licensing Staff: Messaging

Key Message: HIP is a legally required certification for migratory bird hunters that provides important data to ensure the future of migratory bird hunting. For details visit: fws.gov/HIP. Those who do not intend to hunt migratory birds should not register for HIP.

- Everyone who uses your system to purchase a license and intends to hunt migratory birds (see list below), is required by law to obtain HIP certification.
- Those who use your system to purchase a license and do not intend to hunt migratory birds (see list below) should NOT register for HIP certification.
- More and more state wildlife agencies are recognizing that clean, complete HIP registrations are critical for the future of migratory bird hunting.
- The USFWS will work with you to ensure that your system collects HIP registration data as effectively as possible, and in a way that can be integrated with other state agency data.
- The Harvest Information Program (HIP) allows biologists to estimate how many migratory birds (ducks, geese, doves, etc.) hunters harvest each year.
- Harvest estimates are critically important for ensuring the health of bird populations and future hunting seasons.
- Obtaining HIP certification simply requires users to answer a few short questions about their hunting activity.
- Collecting complete, accurate HIP registration data helps ensure the future of migratory bird hunting.
- Hunters need to obtain HIP certification in each state where they intend to hunt migratory birds.
- HIP is a cooperative effort between state fish and wildlife agencies and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.
- The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will select a small percentage of HIP registrants to complete a migratory bird harvest survey every year.
- List of migratory game birds:
 - Ducks
 - Geese (including brant)
 - Swans
 - Doves and pigeons
 - Cranes
 - Rails
 - Coots
 - Gallinules and moorhens
 - Woodcock and snipe

License System Vendors/Licensing Staff: Communication Tactics

National Tactics: Implemented or coordinated by AFWA HIP Working Group

This audience is so small and specifically defined that the best means for communicating with it is one-on-one. Some tactics could include:

- **HIP & Online Licensing Best Practices Guide** – The AFWA HIP Working Group could work with USFWS to develop a set of HIP best practices for online licensing systems and offer workshops to individual licensing companies or state licensing staff. Go through their process one step at a time and help them optimize the likelihood of collecting complete and accurate HIP registrations.
- **HIP & Online Licensing Workshop** – The AFWA HIP Working Group could work with USFWS to offer workshops to individual licensing companies or state licensing staff. Go through their process one step at a time and help them optimize the likelihood of collecting complete and accurate HIP registrations.

State Tactics: Implemented by HIP coordinator with help from relevant agency staff

This audience is so small and specifically defined that the best means for communicating with it is one-on-one. Some tactics could include:

- States need high-quality HIP data from their licensing system regardless of whether their system was developed by a local provider, national provider, or in-house staff. States should ensure that their licensing software collects HIP registrations in the most accurate way possible.
- States should consider revising their license software contract if it rewards their software vendor for collecting HIP registrations from individuals who do not plan to hunt migratory birds.
- The USFWS has worked with a variety of states on this issue and is available to advise states and their license software developers in their efforts to improve the HIP registration process in their online licensing systems.

Interested states should contact:

Kathy Fleming
Chief, Branch of Monitoring and Data Management
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Division of Migratory Bird Management
Office: (301) 497-5902
Cell: (571) 305-3047
Fax: (301) 497-5871
email: kathy_fleming@fws.gov

Audience 3: State Fish and Wildlife Agency Staff

State Fish and Wildlife Agency Staff: Objectives

- Increase understanding of the HIP registration process
- Increase support/cooperation for the HIP registration process
- Increase the accuracy/quality of interactions with the public on the HIP Issue

Evaluation – Measuring the objectives for this audience will require obtaining a baseline survey before the campaign is launched, and then comparing those baseline results to a second survey taken after the campaign has run for a season. The same survey could be implemented periodically to measure the long-term effectiveness of the campaign. There are details below regarding the means of measuring each objective in the survey.

- **Increase understanding of the HIP registration process** – Two possible options for measuring this objective include:
 1. In a survey, ask the respondents if they understood the HIP registration program and take them at their word. An increase in understanding over the baseline would indicate success. However, given typical response bias, some individuals who do not fully understand HIP might erroneously indicate that they do. The bias would be unknown, but this method would still provide a good index of success over time.
 2. The second method is to actually test respondent understanding. This could be done with a single question that offers three definitions for the HIP program, or by asking a series of questions about the HIP program. In either case, an increase in correct answers over the baseline would be considered a success.
- **Increased support/cooperation for the HIP registration process** – The only way to simply determine if a population supports a program is to ask them. If this is being done in the same survey that was used to measure awareness and/or understanding, then this should be the last question in the survey, and it should be positioned so the previous HIP questions cannot be seen and/or revised when the participants come to this question.

The question should then give a simple explanation of HIP registration (see the message below) and ask participants if they believe the program is good for conservation. An increase in the belief that HIP is a good program would be considered a success.

- **Are you HIP? Quizzes** – If your agency is using the “Are you HIP?” quizzes, those quizzes might serve as an alternative to an evaluation survey if you receive enough responses. Quiz results trending would indicate the campaign is working.

State F&W Agency Staff: Messaging

Key Message: HIP is a legally required certification for migratory bird hunters in (state name) that provides important data to ensure the future of migratory bird hunting. For details visit: fws.gov/HIP.

Anyone hunting migratory birds (see list below) in (state name), is required by law to obtain HIP certification.

- If you do not hunt migratory birds (see list below) please DO NOT register for HIP certification.
- The Harvest Information Program (HIP) allows biologists to estimate how many migratory birds (ducks, geese, doves, etc.) hunters harvest each year.
- Harvest estimates are critically important for ensuring the health of bird populations and future hunting seasons.
- Obtaining HIP certification simply requires you to answer a few short questions about your hunting activity.
- Answering the HIP questions truthfully and accurately helps ensure the future of migratory bird hunting.
- Hunters need to obtain HIP certification in every state where they intend to hunt migratory birds.
- HIP is a cooperative effort between (insert agency name), other state fish and wildlife agencies, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.
- The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will select a small percentage of HIP registrants to complete a migratory bird harvest survey during every license year.
- List of migratory game birds:
 - Ducks
 - Geese (including brant)
 - Swans
 - Doves and pigeons
 - Cranes
 - Rails
 - Coots
 - Gallinules and moorhens
 - Woodcock and snipe

State Fish and Wildlife Agency Staff: Communication Tactics

National Tactics: Implemented or coordinated by AFWA HIP Working Group

Professional Conservation Associations – The Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies and its regional associations, Association for Conservation Information, law enforcement associations, and other conservation-related agency associations provide excellent ways to reach out to conservation professionals all over the country. They offer events, newsletters, email blasts, and publications that all could be used to deliver HIP messaging.

- **Advertising/Sponsorships** – Associations offer events, webinars, and publications to their members and often offer sponsorships or advertising to help defer the costs. These vehicles offer an efficient means of getting in front of state agency employees all over the country.
- **Public Relations** – If funds aren't available for advertising, PR is always an alternative. Associations are often looking for content for publications, websites, and social media. The HIP story is ideal.
- **Conferences** – Conferences offer the most efficient method of face-to-face communication with state agency staff from all over the country.
- **Speak at Conferences** – Offer to speak on the HIP issue at conferences. You could offer a quick understanding of HIP or an in-depth workshop on integrating HIP into your license purchasing system.
- **Booth at Conferences** – A booth (especially in a high traffic location) is another excellent way to reach event attendees.
- **Offer Training to States** – Many states share the same issues regarding HIP registration and are working to fix them. Why not help them by offering training to their staff?
- **Webinars** – Offer webinars to state agency employees explaining HIP, how it works, and why it is important. Offer the webinars live periodically (once a quarter?) and record them for those who prefer to learn on their own timetable.
- **Offer Guest Speakers** – Some agencies (and other organizations) would rather put together their own events than attend someone else's webinar. Support that, too! Offering presentations on a variety of HIP-related topics to other agencies will help them build the program they want and ensure the HIP message is properly delivered.
- **FWS Videos** – Training videos are handy for everyone. They can be shown to a group or used to onboard a new state employee. A series of FWS videos on HIP, the HIP process, and why HIP is important could be produced and integrated into every state agency's training program.

State Tactics: implemented by HIP coordinator with help from relevant agency staff

Intra Agency Communications – The best/most efficient way to reach employees of a state agency is through that agency’s internal communication channels. The process for accessing internal communication channels is different in every agency, so it is difficult to be very specific, but following are some potential tools every agency could use to deliver HIP messages.

- **Posters** – Posters on department walls, in the breakroom, or on the bulletin board will get noticed if they are eye catching and placed throughout the facility. Posters also give you the ability to concentrate your messages in the departments (licensing, enforcement, etc.) that need to hear your message the most.
- **Public Relations** – Agencies produce a lot of content for their staff. They have internal web pages, newsletters, eblasts, staff meetings, and other communications vehicles all looking for content. Write a story on why HIP is important to your agency and send it to the staff members in charge of those efforts. They might be in communications or HR or just individuals who volunteered to produce a column each month. Find out who they are and share the HIP story. You could help them out and help yourself out, too!
- **Eblasts** – Your agency might let you send an email to everyone (or perhaps to certain staff functions). Send them a brief note as to why HIP is important to them and a link to more information for those who are interested.

Training

- **Lessons** – Offer to teach live lessons or webinars to your fellow state agency employees explaining HIP, how it works, and why it is important. Offer the webinars live periodically (once a quarter?) and record them for those who choose to learn on their own timetable.
- **FWS Guest Speakers** – Reach out to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to see if they have anyone willing to speak to your staff about HIP. It’s always good to deliver the message through multiple different sources, so your audiences don’t get tired of hearing from the same speaker.
- **Videos** – Consider making training videos. They could be shown to a group or used to onboard new state employees. A series of videos on HIP, the HIP process, and why HIP is important could be integrated into your agency’s training program.
- **“How HIP are you?” Quizzes** – Once you’ve been delivering HIP messages to your agency staff for a while, make it fun. Put together some fun HIP quizzes that test your fellow staffers on their basic HIP knowledge. Those who get a question right or get the best scores on a quiz could win a prize like a hat or T-shirt. Take their picture for the staff newsletter or the HIP wall of fame.

You could make the HIP quizzes even more fun by spontaneously showing up popping up at different locations in your agency, calling random staffers, or using them to kick off staff or department meetings.

Audience 4: License Retailers

License Retailers: Objectives

- Increase understanding of the HIP registration process
- Encourage migratory bird hunters to register for HIP as they purchase hunting licenses

Evaluation – Communication efforts need to be evaluated for effectiveness and efficiency. The good news is that because the population for this set of objectives is relatively small, the scope of the evaluation method is not as huge as it might be if you were trying to survey, say, all dove hunters. The bad news is that this audience is probably less likely to respond to a survey request than agency staff. It will be important to show them the benefit of participating.

Measuring the success of retailers' encouragement of interactions with their customers will be difficult, but the quality of the HIP data collected by that retailer might be a substitute.

Measuring all the objectives for this audience will require obtaining a baseline survey before the campaign is launched, and then comparing those baseline results to a second survey taken after the campaign has run for a season. The same survey could be implemented year after year to measure the long-term effectiveness of the campaign. There are details below regarding the means of measuring each objective in the survey.

- **Increase understanding of the HIP registration process** – Two options for measuring this objective include:
 1. You could simply ask the respondents if they understood the HIP registration program. An increase in understanding over the baseline would indicate success. However, given typical response bias, some individuals who do not fully understand HIP might erroneously indicate that they do. The bias would be unknown, but this method would still provide a good index of success over time.
 2. The second method is to actually test their understanding. This could be done with a single question that offers three definitions for the HIP program, or by asking a series of questions about the HIP program. In either case, an increase in correct answers over the baseline would be considered a success.
- **Encourage migratory bird hunters to register for HIP as they purchase their hunting licenses** – Measuring the quality of interactions between retailers and their customers regarding HIP registration is almost impossible. But the completeness of the HIP registrations collected could be considered a measurement of the interaction. This method would require isolating third-party-collected HIP registrations and evaluating them as outlined in the migratory bird hunter audience section. This metric is based on states' abilities to isolate HIP registration data received from third-party license vendors from the data received from states' own license sales. Doing so would evaluate all third-party vendors collectively and not individually.

- **Are you HIP? Quizzes** – If your agency is using the “Are you HIP?” quizzes with retailers, those quizzes might be an alternative to an evaluation survey if you receive enough responses. If quiz results trend upward over the length of the campaign and from year to year, it’s a good indication the campaign is working.

License Retailers: Messaging

Key Message: HIP is a legally required certification for migratory bird hunters that provides important data to ensure the future of migratory bird hunting. For details visit: fws.gov/HIP. Those who do not intend to hunt migratory birds should not register for HIP.

- Your customers who hunt migratory birds (see list below) are required by law to obtain HIP certification.
- If you are assisting a customer who does not hunt migratory birds (see list below), please DO NOT register them for HIP certification.
- The Harvest Information Program (HIP) allows biologists to estimate how many migratory birds (ducks, geese, doves, etc.) hunters harvest each year.
- Harvest estimates are critically important for ensuring the health of bird populations and future hunting seasons.
- The future of migratory bird hunting helps ensure the future of sporting goods retailers across the nation.
- Obtaining HIP certification simply requires your customers to answer a few short questions about their hunting activity. It does not slow down the retail license sale process significantly.
- Helping your customers answer HIP questions accurately helps ensure the future of migratory bird hunting.
- Hunters need to obtain HIP certification in every state where they intend to hunt migratory birds.
- HIP is a cooperative effort between state fish and wildlife agencies and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.
- The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will select a small percentage of HIP registrants to complete a migratory bird harvest survey every license year.
- List of migratory game birds:
 - Ducks
 - Geese (including brant)
 - Swans
 - Doves and pigeons
 - Cranes
 - Rails
 - Coots
 - Gallinules and moorhens
 - Woodcock and snipe

License Retailers: Communication Tactics

National Tactics: Implemented or coordinated by AFWA HIP Working Group

Industry Media – Magazines and websites aimed at sporting goods retailers are the most efficient way to reach license retailers all over the country. Here are just a few of the potential media outlets:

- National Shooting Sports Foundation publications
- Shooting Sports Retailer
- Sporting Goods Business Magazine
- World Federation of Sporting Goods Industry Magazine
- National Sporting Goods Association Scoreboard
- Shooting Industry Magazine

Tactics that could be used with sporting goods retailer media include:

- **Public Service Announcements** – Because the action we are asking people to take (accurate HIP registration) is pro-conservation and for the public good, you may ask media outlets to run your messages as public service announcements.
- **Public Relations** – You could also provide stories to these media outlets explaining the importance of HIP and asking their readers to register properly.

State Tactics: implemented by HIP coordinator with help from relevant agency staff

Management – Clerks won't be able to take the time necessary to collect accurate HIP data if management is encouraging them to rush through license sales. Any effort to get the staff members actually selling licenses to the public to prioritize HIP is going to have to start from the top.

- **Direct mail and email** – States could send letters, postcards, or emails to their lists of license retailers explaining the importance of proper HIP registration and the common errors. Such outreach materials could offer staff training materials and assistance to help those who actually sell licenses to collect more complete and/or accurate registrations.

Staff/Clerk Visits – The clerks in license retailers control the hunting license purchase experience for many hunters. You will need to reach out to them to increase their understanding of the importance of HIP so that they allow and encourage hunters to properly register.

- **Posters** – Posters in retail backrooms, staff breakrooms, and other staff-only locations could urge employees to help “keep hunters HIP”.
- **Visits/Cold Calls** – Agency personnel could visit or call sporting goods stores and explain the importance of HIP and retail's role in HIP registration, directly to the frontline retail staff.
- **“How HIP are you?” Quiz** – Once you've started delivering HIP messages to retailers, make it fun. Put together some fun HIP quizzes that test their basic HIP knowledge. Those who get a question right or get the best scores on a quiz could win a prize like a hat or T-shirt.

Appendix A: Social Media Usage Guide

Defining Social Media – In current times, the Internet is dominated by various social media sites. A social media site is defined as a virtual network or community that allows the sharing or transferring of ideas and information ([Investopedia](#)). There are many different kinds of social media, such as microblogging, networking, and media sharing. Each site has its own benefits and abilities, so it is incredibly important to understand what your overall goals with social media are and what outlets are going to best help you achieve those goals.

There are several terms that are useful to keep in your back pocket when it comes to social media. Please see the terms and definitions in the table below.

Engagement	Engagement refers to how users interact with posts or entities on social media. It can be in the form of likes, shares, comments, and more. For most social media channels, one of the main goals users chase is to increase engagement on their posts and profile.
Viral	When a post goes viral, this means it is spread and shared exponentially. These posts can be positive or negative, but always include something relatable, funny, feel-good, or shocking to a large number of people. Often, viral posts gain thousands or even millions of views and/or likes.
Likes	Any post on most social media channels has the option to “like” it, usually denoted by a thumbs-up or heart symbol. This is one of the main indicators of good engagement.
Shares	If correct privacy settings are turned on, users can share posts to their own profiles so that it will appear to anyone who is following them on that platform. Sharing is the main way a post goes viral.
Reactions	Reactions are most commonly used on Facebook. These are different emotions that users can attach to posts that they see, serving as alternatives to the normal “Like” button. For example, a user can choose a heart symbol in order to express care or love.
Algorithm	In social media, algorithms are what dictate what a person sees on their home page or News Feed. Some channels prioritize posts with the most engagement, and therefore showing those posts first (e.g., Facebook and Instagram). Others prioritize content, showing users posts that they would be most likely to be interested or engaged in.
Analytics	Social media analytics are statistics and trends about how well someone’s page or posts are doing. There are several third-party analytics tools, but some platforms have their own analytics tool built into the channel, such as Facebook.
Bio	Every entity on social media has a biographical section on their personal profile page. This section can contain anything the user wishes to share, but there is often a word limit.
News Feed/Feed	News Feeds (of Feeds) serve as the “homepage” on any social media stie. It contains a collection of posts from people or entities a person follows.
Follow/Follower	To “Follow” a page (or user) on Facebook means to subscribe to its content. That entity’s posts will show up on its followers’ News Feeds.
Hashtag	Hashtags are words or phrases included normally at the end of posts that are preceded by a ‘#’ symbol. They are primarily used to group similar posts together.

What should State Agencies use Social Media for?

As opposed to an individual user, whose goal is usually to generate as much engagement as possible on the social media platforms him/herself, an entity like a company, nonprofit, or government organization should focus on using social media to drive traffic to its website. This can be done in a number of ways, but perhaps the most effective is to include links to the website in most (if not all) of the organization's posts. This provides a direct next step if a follower wants to learn more. Another place to make sure to include a link to the website is in the profile's bio section, which is described in detail for each channel below.

Top Channels and Strategies

Currently, the most popular social media channels are Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, Pinterest, and TikTok. Each channel or network has different functionalities and best uses, but the general idea of building virtual connections is the same. Here, we have outlined the strategies for hunting-related content in various social media channels.

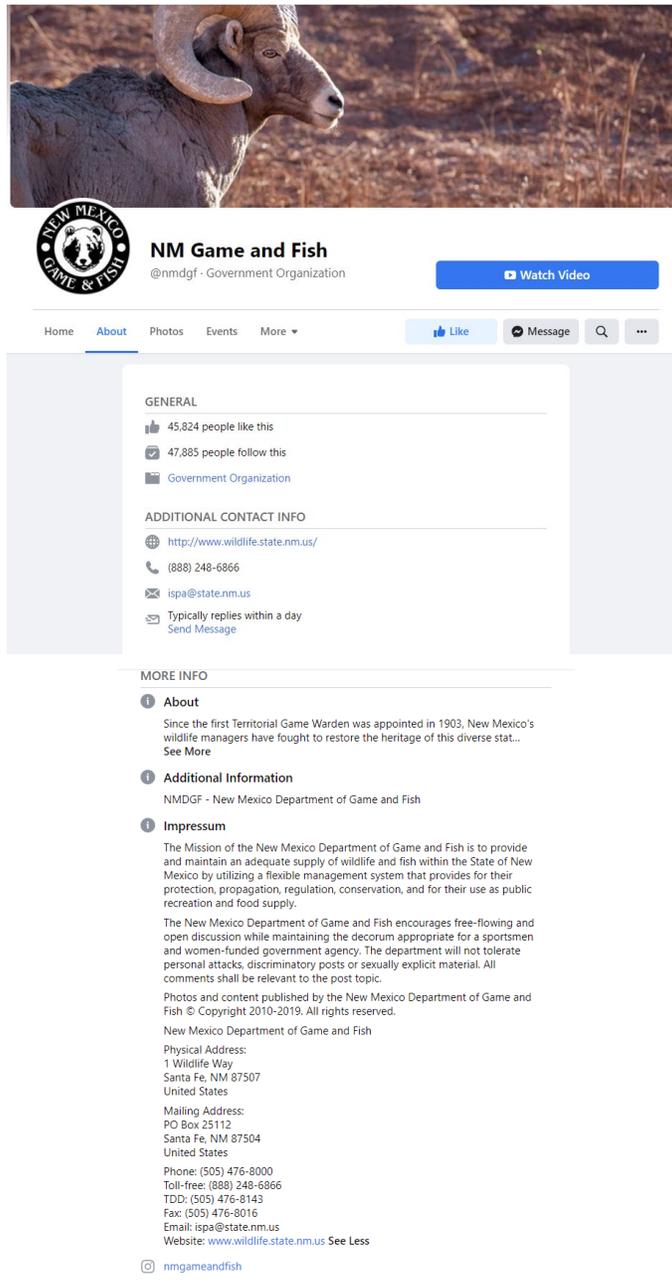
Facebook

Facebook is generally used to build a network of connections with family and friends. Users will also follow groups and organizations they care about to stay up to date on what is going on. News articles and interesting information is also shared among Facebook users, which generate a large amount of attention.

Profile

An effective Facebook profile for an entity like a state agency should include as much detail as possible without completely replacing the website. It is important to complete as much of the "About" section as possible, considering that most people who visit your page will be looking for information there. Include a website link, contact information, and a short description or the mission of the organization. Make sure to keep this description short so that people will be intrigued to go to the website to learn more.

The sample below shows the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish's profile section. All contact information is included and up to date, the "About" section includes a brief mission statement of the agency, and a link to the website is clearly displayed. This is a great example of an effective profile page for Facebook.



The image shows the Facebook profile page for the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish. At the top is a profile picture of a bighorn sheep. Below it is the profile name "NM Game and Fish" with the handle "@nmdgf - Government Organization" and a "Watch Video" button. The navigation bar includes "Home", "About", "Photos", "Events", and "More". There are buttons for "Like", "Message", and search. The "About" section is expanded, showing "GENERAL" information: 45,824 likes, 47,885 followers, and "Government Organization" category. "ADDITIONAL CONTACT INFO" includes the website <http://www.wildlife.state.nm.us/>, phone number (888) 248-6866, email ispa@state.nm.us, and a note that they typically reply within a day. The "MORE INFO" section includes "About", "Additional Information" (NMDGF - New Mexico Department of Game and Fish), and "Impressum". The "Impressum" section contains the department's mission statement, a disclaimer, and contact information: Physical Address: 1 Wildlife Way, Santa Fe, NM 87507, United States; Mailing Address: PO Box 25112, Santa Fe, NM 87504, United States; Phone: (505) 476-8000; Toll-Free: (888) 248-6866; TDD: (505) 476-8143; Fax: (505) 476-8016; Email: ispa@state.nm.us; Website: www.wildlife.state.nm.us. A social media icon for "nmgameandfish" is also visible.

New Mexico Department of Game and Fish Facebook profile information.

Post Frequency and Timing

It is very easy for posts to get lost on the News Feed on Facebook, so posting frequently is recommended. About three to five posts per week is ideal. For maximum engagement and visibility, schedule posts to be published around lunchtime or late afternoon/evening when it is more likely that people are checking their social media. Account for time differences when targeting people in other time zones. Avoid posting more than twice in a single day. This can upset users if they see more than one post from the same organization as they are scrolling.

Post content

Facebook posts should always include some kind of visual media to catch scrollers' attention, whether it be photos, videos, infographics, or a website preview. Make sure to keep photos and videos landscape oriented. The written content should be no longer than three sentences, as social media users tend to stop reading a post at that point. Keep it on-point and straightforward with something at the beginning to draw attention.

Post Example

The following post made by the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish is an excellent example of an effective Facebook post by an organization. It contains three sentences and a piece of media. What would improve this post would be a link to the agency's website or another outside source for learning more about something, such as how to get involved in turkey hunting in New Mexico.



Post made by the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish on May 21, 2021.

Twitter

Twitter tends to be one of the more negatively voiced platforms because it serves as a stage for the strongest opinions to be shared and reshared over and over again. The 280-character limit per post forces users to condense their thoughts into short sentences and hashtags. Twitter is best used for sharing news, opinions, and short updates.

Profile

Compared to platforms like Facebook, the profile pages on Twitter are less detailed. They typically include a mission statement, location, and website link. Make sure to include all of these elements, as it is the key to making your profile organized and professional. Profile pictures should include the organization's logo, while header images should be actual photos (bonus if the photos contain people and faces).

Post Frequency and Timing

It is recommended to post at least once a day; however, posting multiple times in one day is acceptable, which differs from other platforms. The Twitter feed acts like a written version of multiple streams of consciousness. One user will write a Tweet about how their coffee order wasn't correct and the very next person could be tweeting about the Presidential election. Tweets are updated in real time and users constantly see new ones popping up. The Tweets higher in the list have been posted most recently. For maximum views, tweet in the middle of the day during lunchtime or in the late afternoon/evening when people are more likely to check their Twitter. Also account for time differences if a certain post is aimed at viewers living in a different time zone.

Post Content

Content on Twitter should fit under one of the following categories: news/information, opinion, or campaign. An example of a news post would be announcing the passing of a new law or regulation or including a link for users to read and find out more. Opinion posts can come in many different forms, but for an organization, it should reflect its own values and mission. Sharing a picture of a family hunting with wording that talks about how fun hunting is would fit into this category. Campaigns are slightly different, as they can contribute to social media movements. These posts generally contain popular hashtags and encourage people to perform some action.

Use at least one hashtag in every Tweet, as posts without them tend to get lost in the masses. This will also ensure that your content is being shown to your target audiences. Hashtags do count towards the 250-character limit, so focus on using short hashtags (two to three words) if your post's content is on the longer side. Do some research into what kind of posts are using a given hashtag. This will help you pinpoint where you would like your content to be and whom you would like to view it. Also avoid simple or vague hashtags like #birds. There are millions of different kinds of posts that can be categorized under this topic. Something like #duckhunting or #birdwatching is more specific and will help to ensure your post is categorized correctly.

Like most social media platforms, Tweets do well if they include media such as photos, videos, or infographics. However, these visuals are not as necessary on Twitter as they are on other platforms.

Example

The following post is an example of what would be considered a news/information post. Is it straightforward and to-the-point and includes three specific hashtags to help group the post with similar content on Twitter? What would improve this post would be the addition of a link for followers to learn more about turkey hunting in New Mexico, read more about this story, etc.



New Mexico Department of Game and Fish Twitter post on May 17, 2020

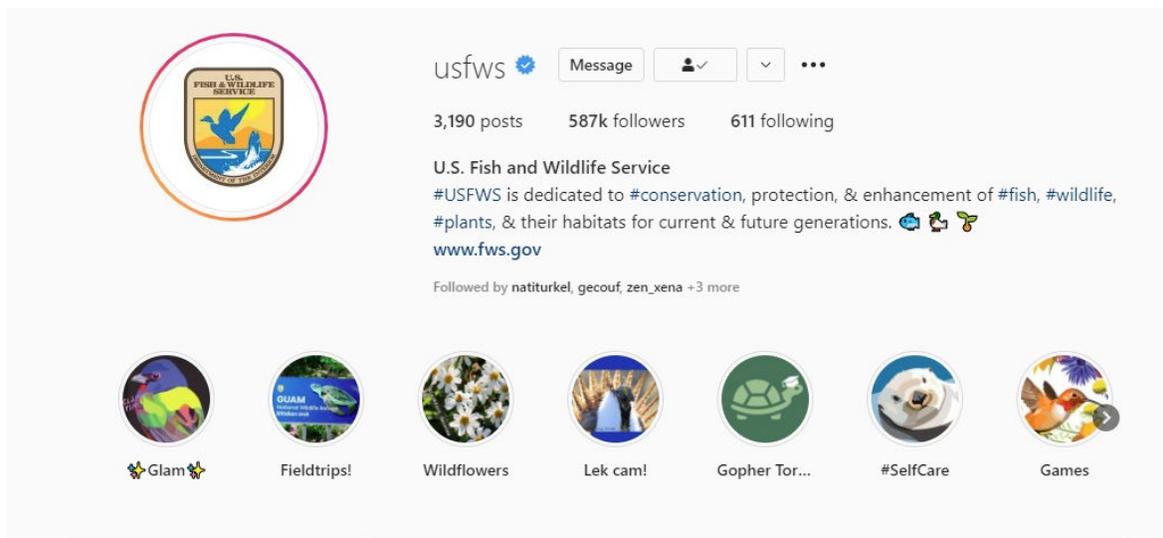
Instagram

Instagram, now owned by Facebook, is a platform dedicated to sharing media. Photos, videos, and infographics are all fair game. Though you can access Instagram accounts on a computer, users can only make posts through a smartphone.

Profile

Like Twitter, Instagram profiles consist of a small amount of information--just enough to pique interest and encourage followers to view more posts or visit the website. The bio section should include a short description of the organization and a few hashtags that will allow the profile to appear alongside other similar pages. The bio should also include a link to the organization's website where followers can learn more. The profile picture should be the organization's logo in order to separate it from other similar pages.

Instagram also allows users to create permanent stories on their profile. These are collections of photos, videos, music, etc. under different categories that are permanently displayed on your profile. See the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's profile shown below. They have stories called "Glam," "Fieldtrips," "Wildflowers," and more.



The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Instagram profile.

Post Frequency and Timing

Instagram's algorithm for the news feed is similar to Facebook. They prioritize posts with a lot of engagement first, then go by date/time posted. Suggested post frequency is five times per week. Do not post more than once in a day.

Post Content

Because Instagram is a media-based platform, all posts must include an image or video. The more compelling and eye-catching, the better. You can include more than one photo in a post, but do not exceed three or four, as users are less likely to scroll through more than that. Captions should be

as short as possible and include at least two or three specific hashtags. Instagram tends to be more positive in voice, so keep the tone light or inspiring.

Below is a great example of the kinds of hunting posts that would do well on Instagram. Improvements include shortening the caption and making a couple of the hashtags more specific (e.g. #deer is too general).



Instagram post made by the Missouri Department of Conservation on November 13, 2020.

Pinterest

Pinterest is a lifestyle platform, allowing users to create virtual “boards” where they can “pin” interesting information, recipes, or how-tos. The individual user utilizes the platform when looking for DIYs, new ideas, creativity, inspiration, and more. Therefore, users are less likely to follow an organization or entity if it does not provide content aligning with these categories.

Profile and Post Content

Like Twitter and Instagram, Pinterest profile pages are very simple and straightforward. The profile picture should contain a clear, high-quality logo for the organization or agency. There should also be a short description (no more than one sentence) describing the mission of the organization or the purpose of the Pinterest account (i.e. a collection of animal facts, recipes, etc.).

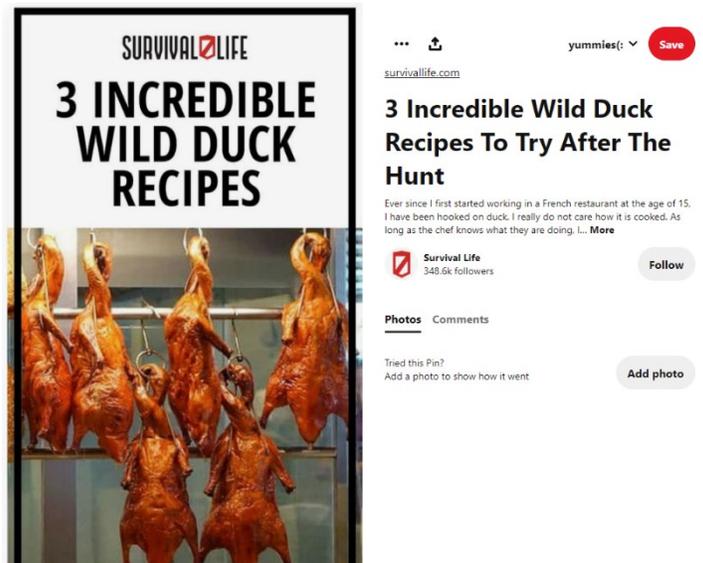
Create multiple “boards” that showcase different things you are sharing with your audience that will be displayed on your profile. For hunting-related themes, consider boards with game recipes, hunting tips, or general hunting information.

Post Frequency and Timing

Unlike other platforms, post frequency and timing do not matter with Pinterest, for the most part. The algorithm for the homepage shows users the content that is most relevant to their search, even if the post is from five years ago. Post or pin content when you deem it interesting or relevant, with the hopes of it staying relevant for a long period of time.

Examples

The images below show a couple of examples of appropriate Pinterest content. They are easily shareable, and they include information or DIYs and an effective description.



Recipe post on Pinterest.

Federal Duck Stamps

One of the most successful conservation programs ever

BACKGROUND & HISTORY

- 950 million dollars generated by stamp sales
- 33% of endangered and threatened species find food or shelter in lands bought with stamp funds
- One stamp serves as a hunting license, conservation tool, and pass for National Wildlife Refuges
- Once a year the Federal Duck Stamp Contest is held to choose artwork for the next stamp
- More than ducks many birds, mammals, fish, reptiles and amphibians also benefit from stamp sales
- 200 artists across the country enter the contest each year
- 15 species are eligible for the contest each year
- 5 judges are on the contest panel each year

THIS YEAR'S DUCK STAMP CONTEST

- September 15 kicks off the 2017 Federal Duck Stamp Contest
- 98.7% of lands at Horicon National Wildlife Refuge are protected thanks to stamp funds
- The winner Melhosen Hill in the Neal Fine Arts Center at the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point
- 4 previous contest winners have been from Wisconsin

Learn more about Federal Duck Stamps at <http://www.fws.gov/duckstamps>

...
DJC 35th P...
Save

fws.gov

2017 Federal Duck Stamp Contest

Website of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
1.9k followers

Follow

Photos

Comments

Tried this Pin?
Add a photo to show how it went

Add photo

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service saved to Birds

Informational post on Pinterest.

Analytics and Metrics of Success

There are many ways to measure the success of an entity's social media; however, the methods depend heavily on the goals an organization sets regarding the use of social media. These goals should follow the S.M.A.R.T model (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, Time Based).

As stated before, the goal of an agency's social media should be to increase website traffic originating from social media users. Ideally, an agency should make this goal more specific and time-based by defining just how much website attention it wants over a certain period of time (e.g. 25% increase over three months). The goal is measurable because website analytics will show the amount of website visits originating from social media sites. Furthermore, it is relevant because social media is a gold mine of potential target audiences that can be drawn in through clear, direct messaging. This goal is attainable because it includes realistic numbers that can be worked towards.

Social Media Engagement

Increasing Follows

The best way to increase followers on an entity's page is to follow other entities. For example, if the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish follows the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on Instagram, then all the USFWS's followers will see this and likely follow New Mexico's account. The more connections between organizations or other entities there are, the more exposure the account will get to new and diverse audiences.

Getting Involved in the Conversation

Another way to encourage engagement on social media is to engage with your followers. If a follower comments on a post, reply to the comment. If a follower tags the agency in one of their personal posts, comment and/or share the post. Social media users are more likely to engage with pages that engage back. It also shows that the agency or organization cares about the thoughts and opinions of its followers, which improves the likelihood that those same followers will share the content within their own circles.

Appendix B: YouTube Usage Guide

YouTube

YouTube is one of the top video hosting and sharing platforms on the internet. There are two main ways an organization can utilize YouTube. The first is to build a following on the YouTube channel itself, striving for more follows, likes, and comments on every video. The second is to treat it solely as storage for video content that can be shared on websites, social media, presentations, etc. This encourages engagement elsewhere rather than on the channel itself. For state agencies or other organizations, the latter is recommended. However, there are still some crucial elements that need to be included.

Profile

Profiles, or channels, on YouTube are very simple and straightforward. The channel's name should be clear enough so that viewers immediately recognize the entity. This also adds credibility. A viewer is much more likely to watch and have confidence in a video posted by "NM Game and Fish" than a video posted by "NMGF." The profile picture should also include the organization or agency's logo to add to the recognizability.

The header image on a channel page should be compelling and eye-catching. However, because of the specific dimensions of the space, make sure to select a landscape-oriented image that will not have the most important elements cut off. YouTube also allows other clickable social media icons to be displayed in the header image so that viewers can visit other social media accounts or a website of that organization. This is a recommended addition.

Post Content

If the YouTube account is being used with the goal of generating engagement on YouTube itself, then the video content plays a big part in encouraging viewers to interact with the channel. The more unique and interesting the video, the more views, likes, and follows the page will get. However, when using YouTube as a video storage site, anything goes as long as it follows [YouTube's Community Guidelines](#).

Regardless of the channel's purpose, each video's description should include enough information to describe what the viewer will see, but not so much that it would replace the video itself. Any songs, video clips, images, or other media taken from another source should be given proper credit here.

Appendix C: “Make Everyone HIP” Checklist

Make Everyone HIP

Complete everything on this checklist and you’ll have the HIPest state in the union!

Hunter Tactics Completed:

- Licensing software makes it easy for migratory bird hunters to register for HIP and other hunters not to.
- Hunter Ed classes and other hunter education efforts educate new hunters about HIP registration
- Agency Owned Media – Are you using your agencies’ internal tools to talk to hunters about HIP?
 - Email Blasts
 - Regulations Books/Websites
 - Agency Website(s)
- Social Media – Are you using social media to talk to hunters about HIP?
 - Posts
 - Boosted Posts
 - Advertisements
- Retailers - Are you using hunting retailers to spread the word about HIP?
 - Providing posters and brochures for their customers to see
 - Educating their staff so that they can answer questions about HIP accurately
- NGOs – Are you using the local chapters of migratory bird NGOs to reach out to local hunters?
 - Ads in local chapter newsletters
 - Providing press releases/articles for local chapter newsletters
 - Participating in chapter events that will get the HIP message in front of hunters
- YouTube – Are you using YouTube to reach out to hunters?
 - Posting your own videos on HIP
 - Providing content (and T-shirts, hats, etc.) to hunting influencers?
 - Advertising on YouTube
- Online Advertising – Are you advertising online to reach your hunters?
 - Search Advertising
 - Content-driven Ads
- Regional Hunting Media – Are you using regional, state or local hunting media?
 - Public Service Announcements
 - Press Releases/Articles

License System Vendors/Licensing Staff Tactics Completed:

- Are you working with your licensing department and/or licensing software vendor to make it easy for migratory bird hunters to register for HIP and other hunters not to?

State Fish and Wildlife Agency Staff Tactics Completed:

- Intra Agency Communications – Are you using internal communications to educate other staffers on HIP?
 - Posters
 - Newsletter Articles
 - Eblasts
- Staff Training/Onboarding – Are you asking HR and Training to include HIP in staff training and onboarding?
 - Lessons on HIP
 - Guest Speakers
 - Videos
 - “How HIP are you Quizzes”

License Retailer Tactics Completed:

- Reaching out to store management
- Educating staff/clerks
 - Posters in the breakroom or backroom
 - Visits/Cold Calls
 - “How HIP are you?” Quizzes