

# Reclamation Manual

## Directives and Standards

---

**Subject:** News Release and Media Relations

**Purpose:** Prescribes requirements for the Bureau of Reclamation's News Releases and Media Relations

**Authority:** Regulations cited and defined in 470 DM 1

**Contacts:** Public Affairs Group, W-1540, Regional Public Affairs Officers

---

1. **News Release and Media Relations.** As an integral part of its mission, Reclamation has a continuing responsibility to keep the public informed in a timely and accurate way about its various programs, activities, and research.
  - A. **Scope.** This directives and standards covers all communication to the news media including: news releases, media advisories, formal statements, interviews, press conferences and briefings, letters to the editor, opinion pieces that are opposite the editorial page ("op eds"), technical announcements, and other information or material given to news media representatives, a collective term that includes, but is not limited to, reporters, editors, and writers for newspapers, magazines, journals and trade publications; radio or television stations or networks and online news services; and any other electronic or print media related to news distribution that could serve as an information outlet.
  - B. **Non-Advocacy.** Reclamation, as a Federal Government agency, must maintain an unbiased and impartial approach to its information. All Reclamation products, materials, and communications with the media must remain neutral and not advocate or persuade. For additional information contact Reclamation's ethics counselor. Media issues regarding policy issues concerning program funding and pending appropriation or legislation must be referred to the Chief, Public Affairs, in the Commissioner's Office.
2. **Delegation of Authority.**
  - A. **Commissioner's Office.** Reclamation's Chief of Public Affairs in the Commissioner's Office has primary responsibility for all Reclamation's news media relations, including the review and approval of news releases, letters to the editor, and other material released to the general public through the news media.
  - B. **Regional Communication Offices.** Each Reclamation Region has a designated Public Affairs Officer who is responsible for news releases and media relations within the Region. The Reclamation Chief of Public Affairs has delegated this responsibility to each Regional Public Affairs Officer.

# Reclamation Manual

## Directives and Standards

---

- C. **Other Offices.** All offices are responsible for following the review and approval procedures of Commissioner's Office and their Regions in accordance with this directives and standards.
3. **Notification of Release and Required Copy.** An advance, information copy of all approved news releases must be provided as a heads-up to the Commissioner's and appropriate Regional Public Affairs Office 24 hours before distribution, or as much in advance as possible. (See paragraph 4 for additional clarification.)
- A. **Exceptions, when timelines of release is critical to issues of public health and safety.** Timely, efficient release of breaking news and information during crises, such as natural disasters or personal tragedies, often requires swift publication and/or dissemination of information. The originating office may issue a brief statement or media advisory to the news media in place of a news release. In such cases, the originating office acts at its own discretion in approval and release, but must provide the Commissioner's Office Public Affairs and the appropriate Regional Public Affairs Office with copies of any such release of information concurrent with its release to the news media.
- B. **Opinion Pieces ("op eds") and Letters to the Editor.** The special nature of opinion pieces and letters to the editor requires approval at the national level. Any opinion letter or letter to the editor written in an official capacity or based on official expertise must be sent through the Regional Public Affairs Officer to the Chief, Public Affairs, for approval before it is submitted to the media outlet. These communication pieces require further approval at the Department level, and sufficient advance planning and coordination time is required (470 DM 1-1.3E).
4. **Review and Approval.**
- A. **National-Level News Releases.** National news is defined as information dealing with national or policy issues and/or citing the Commissioner, other members of the Reclamation Leadership Team (excluding Regional Directors; see paragraph 4B, below); involving Presidential or Secretarial policy or initiatives and/or quotes from the Secretary, any Assistant Secretary, other Interior bureau head or non-Interior official; involving appropriations or legislation pending before Congress; or if widespread media coverage is anticipated regarding major policy statements, controversial issues, breaking news, or other release of information that are priorities for the current Administration. The Chief, Public Affairs, will determine if any higher-level approval must be obtained and must approve all national-level news releases. The Chief, Public Affairs, will forward all news releases that require additional approval to appropriate offices in Reclamation and Interior.

# Reclamation Manual

## Directives and Standards

---

- B. **Regional-Level News Releases.** Regional news is defined as information that deals with regional issues, cites the Regional Director, or when widespread regional coverage is anticipated from an issue. Regional Public Affairs Officers are responsible for the approval and coordination of the release of news releases for the Regions and for the development and implementation of a process for approval of local news releases. An advance copy of all Regionally approved news releases must be provided to the Commissioner's and appropriate Regional Public Affairs Office.
5. **News Release-Style, Format.**
- A. All news releases, media advisories, and other vehicles of communication with the news media must use the official format and letterhead provided as part of the Visual Identity project.
- B. All news releases must conclude with the following statement:
- “Reclamation is the largest wholesale water supplier in the United States, and the nation's second largest producer of hydroelectric power. It's facilities also provide substantial flood control, recreation, and fish and wildlife benefits. Visit our website at <http://www.usbr.gov>.”