
Service Flickr Management Plan

Introduction

In one of his first acts as President, President Obama issued a memorandum encouraging federal government agencies to use new technologies to engage with the public. Now, across the federal government, agencies are finding new avenues to build awareness about their programs and initiatives. The White House and a number of other government agencies use Flickr to distribute photographs to the public. Flickr is a photo-hosting website where users can easily store, sort, search, and share photos online for others to view and use. Although photographs we might present on Flickr could simply be made available through the Service's own National Digital Library, Flickr provides a convenient and simple way to reach a larger audience interested specifically in images of our lands, creatures and events. For this audience, Flickr gives us an opportunity to introduce them to the Fish and Wildlife Service and invite them to our website.

Flickr.com is one of the most visited sites on the Web, with more than 20 million visitors daily. Flickr currently hosts approximately 3.5 billion photos and videos, though that number is growing rapidly. During 2009, Flickr grew from 65.4 million to just over 88.5 million unique monthly visitors worldwide – a 35% increase.

1.1 Why Do We Need a Management Plan?

The Department has signed a terms of service agreement with Flickr.com, allowing bureaus to create Flickr accounts adapted to the needs of the federal government and built on legally sound agreements. Only accounts specifically designated as falling under this agreement carry its protections and legal grounding. The ease with which new accounts can be created outside of the agreement makes it especially important that the Service actively and carefully manage its Flickr presence. Further, due to the ease and low cost of creating new Flickr accounts, there is a potential for an explosion of accounts that are irregularly maintained or lack common elements to “brand” these products for the Service. This management plan is part of a broader strategy to guide and empower staff throughout the Service to produce quality products and increase our capability to communicate in an interconnected age.

Management and Administration

2.1 Will the Service have a single Flickr account or several?

Initially, the Service will create and maintain one USFWS Flickr account for each region, including one national account. Account managers will post photos to their specific collection, or “photostream,” and develop sets or other photo groupings to organize the images by categories such as refuges, fisheries, conservation issues (e.g. White-nose syndrome in bats), or events. This will enable each account to maintain a comprehensive collection, while still allowing visitors to find their area of interest.

Individual stations, programs or offices are encouraged to coordinate with regional External Affairs offices to develop content for their regional Flickr account.

Service partners, employees, or others who wish to distribute public-domain Service photo content through their own website, Flickr account, or other means may do so without restriction.

2.2 What office(s) will have responsibility for managing the Flickr accounts?

Each regional External Affairs office will be responsible for overseeing that region's Flickr account and for developing processes for programs to produce and contribute content. In addition, this office will monitor the site and ensure the Service is meeting content and policy requirements in the photographs, including ensuring that only photographs in the public domain are posted to Service accounts. The Washington Office of External Affairs will manage the national Flickr account. The national account will primarily serve as a portal to other accounts and aggregate photographs within suitable topics or as part of national campaigns.

2.3 Who will be allowed to post content to the Flickr photostream?

Each Regional External Affairs office will be responsible for determining the best workflow for posting suitable content to its Flickr account.

Creating a Flickr account first requires creating a Yahoo account. Account managers should create a generic (office- rather than person-specific) Yahoo account for this purpose. Each Flickr account will be accessed through this username and password. As there are no other safeguards to prevent unauthorized access and posting of content, each region must maintain strict control over its user name and password by limiting the individuals among whom it is shared. Each regional External Affairs office will be responsible for applying all necessary controls to ensure that its account username and password are not compromised.

Programs, offices and stations will work with their regional content manager to get content uploaded to the regional USFWS Flickr account along with necessary tags and descriptions. If a program, refuge, or field station has a large photo collection it wishes to present on Flickr, regional managers may extend account access to the appropriate employee. Regional account managers will be responsible for changing the password periodically to prevent unauthorized access.

Content Management

3.1 Are there common elements that should be a part of every regional USFWS Flickr account (e.g. logo, profile name, location, website, etc.)?

Each regional Flickr account name should begin with USFWS (region), for example USFWSNortheast. Regional Flickr accounts must include standard elements in keeping

with their status as official outreach products. These common elements, as well as “how to” technical information, will be published in a separate document.

3.2 Are there minimum or maximum file size requirements?

Photos uploaded to Flickr can be any size, and are automatically resized into multiple formats for downloading. This enables users to decide which size file they prefer to access, making Flickr useful to people with a variety of internet connections.

3.3 What will be done to ensure accessibility of the content for people with disabilities?

To ensure accessibility of the photographs for people with disabilities, photos must have proper descriptions in the comment section located below the photo. These descriptions act as alt tags which can be read by screen readers. Photos must also be appropriately tagged and titled.

3.4 Can the Service post copyrighted photos? How is copyright attribution handled?

Service Flickr account managers must not post copyrighted photos. Due to the potential for the rapid spread of photographs once posted to Flickr, it is extremely important that account managers post only photographs for which the Service has complete and unambiguous ownership. Unauthorized posting of copyrighted content, even inadvertently, can result in costly litigation against the Service.

3.5 Do we provide additional information about posted photographs elsewhere other than using the features that Flickr provides?

Photographs in the regional photostreams should include information using the features available when posting content to Flickr, such as a caption, background information, tags, and, if available, a link to a relevant USFWS website.

Photos posted to Flickr may also be suitable for the Service digital library. To make it easier to add Flickr photos to the digital library, Flickr managers should include the following information as part of their photo descriptions:

- Title: The title should be written in the “Title” box provided by Flickr.
- Contact: the default contact for photos posted to Flickr is the primary Flickr account manager. In some instances, account managers may want to include the email address of the individual submitting the photo on behalf of their office, station, or program in the description section.
- Description: The description section should include both a description of the image itself, plus the source, as described below.
- Subject (key words): Key words should be provided in the “Tags” section of the Flickr image upload form.

- Source: Source is the office providing the photo to the Flickr account, not necessarily the office maintaining the account. This information should be included in the description section of the Flickr form.
- Date: Flickr attempts to assign a date to each photo when it is uploaded. This date should be edited to indicate when the picture was originally taken.
- Temp/Perm records: Any images that may qualify as “permanent” records should be submitted directly to the national digital library.

3.6 Should photos posted to the Service’s regional Flickr photostream also be housed on the Service’s website?

The Service’s National Digital Library (<http://www.fws.gov/digitalmedia>) serves as a central repository for images, video, brochures, and other materials. Each Service Flickr account must include a link to the Service digital repository.

Not all images posted on Flickr are suitable for posting to the Digital Repository because of quality, redundancy, etc. However, account managers should look for opportunities to augment the digital library with images intended for their Flickr photostreams.

Service images posted on Flickr may be Federal records requiring preservation outside of Flickr. Account managers should keep a local copy of all images uploaded to their Flickr accounts, along with the description, tags, etc., associated with them in Flickr. See the Service Records Disposition Schedule, *INFO-610: Still Photographs and Images*.

Vision for the Future

Given the popularity and growth of Flickr, Service photos on Flickr could become a major new way to reach an interested public and to meet the Administration’s goals of improved transparency, participation, and collaboration. This management plan is intended to serve as a starting step toward reaching those goals. As the use of this social media tool is ever changing, the Service will need to be attentive and creative in order to exploit new opportunities to use Flickr to entertain and inform the public and to inspire them with the mission of the Service.

As new functionality is developed within Flickr and as the regional accounts described within this management plan mature, the Service should look to expand its use of the site. At the end of CY 2010, External Affairs management, in consultation with the New Media Working Group and the Service Web Council, will evaluate the Service Flickr sites for their effectiveness and compliance with Service Web policy. As a result of that evaluation, this plan may be modified as needed to suit Service communication and business objectives.