

Service Twitter Management Plan - Updated, August 2013

Introduction

Twitter is a free micro-blogging service that enables its users to send and read short posts known as “tweets.” Tweets can include text, links to webpages, photographs, and videos. They are displayed on the author’s profile page and delivered to other users who have subscribed to them or who find them through searches.

With a limit of only 140 characters per tweet, Twitter merges the immediacy of mobile phone texting with the interactivity and broadcasting capabilities of the blog format. Twitter allows the Service to reach very specific audiences with brief, timely messages on a variety of Service related topics quickly, easily, and at little cost.

1.1 Why do we need a Management Plan?

Any Service employee with access to Twitter would find it a simple matter to create an account for his or her office; however, because of this simplicity, there is a significant risk of an explosion of accounts that are not well thought out, are poorly maintained, and generally do a discredit to the Service. This management plan will help the Service manage its Twitter presence in a way that ensures that all Service accounts are responsibly monitored, consistently branded, properly focused, and engaging to our many audiences. Additionally, allowing HQ to keep track of all Service accounts will assist with the creation of Service-wide analytics reports.

Not all Service content is appropriate for Twitter. The way we use Twitter and what we can, and cannot, say there is informed by the Service blog policy issued in April, 2009, which can be found online at <http://www.fws.gov/policy/115fw9.html>. Twitter managers must familiarize themselves with the blog policy to avoid using Twitter inappropriately.

Management and Administration

2.1 Should the Service have one or multiple Twitter accounts?

The Service Twitter presence has as its foundation one Twitter account for each region and one national Twitter account. The National Twitter account – @USFWSHQ – is updated and monitored by the Branch of Audiovisual, Web, and Social Media (AWSM) in External Affairs. The regional External Affairs offices manage regional accounts. This allows the Service to tweet to more geographically specific audiences on behalf of multiple programs, refuges, hatcheries, and field offices, relieving those smaller facilities of the burden of maintaining their own accounts and ensuring that the regional account has a good supply of interesting content.

The Service will allow any office to operate its own Twitter account provided that the office demonstrates that it:

- has a clear outreach objective and a clearly defined intended audience;
- will manage its account thoughtfully and professionally in accordance with Service blog policy and social media policy; and
- has the support of relevant Service management who have been properly informed of the investment in time and resources needed to run a Twitter account successfully.

Any staff wishing to establish a Twitter account on behalf of the Service will need to complete a Twitter Account Management Form and submit it to the appropriate regional or programmatic social media coordinator. At a minimum, new accounts require the approval of the prospective account manager's immediate supervisor. Regions and programs may have additional approval requirements. No Service employee is authorized to establish an official Service Twitter account without first securing proper approval.

The National Social Media Coordinator and Service Social Media Coordinators Group administer the approval process for Twitter accounts to ensure that regions, programs, offices, and stations maintain a cohesive USFWS presence while adhering to official web and social media policy. Once an account has been approved through the region or program, it will be created in HQ by AWSM with all necessary graphic elements, links, and other information.

Account managers of existing regional and programmatic Twitter accounts must complete a Twitter Account Management Form in consultation with their supervisors and submit that form to their regional or programmatic Social Media Coordinator. This representative will work with the account manager to ensure the account has all required elements and is added to a master list of Service social media sites.

2.2 What office will have responsibility for managing the accounts?

Each region, program, or office will be responsible for managing its own Twitter account once it has been properly approved and established. As with Service websites, Regional Directors and Programmatic Assistant Directors are ultimately responsible for the accounts within their organizational areas. The National Social Media Coordinator and AWSM are responsible for keeping track of all Service Twitter accounts to ensure consistency of branding and in order to acquire accurate, Service-wide analytics.

2.3 Who will be allowed to post information to the USFWS Twitter accounts?

Each Twitter account should have one primary content manager and one backup content manager. Each content manager will be responsible for writing tweets and assessing the suitability of tweets proposed for posting. Service management should implement such editorial review and oversight procedures as necessary to ensure proper messaging, tone, and accuracy. Regional account managers must work closely with field content providers to ensure timely posting of high-quality content.

Each official USFWS Twitter account will be accessed through a username and password specific to that account. Twitter account managers must maintain strict control over the username and password for their account(s) and change it periodically if it has been shared. Twitter account managers must provide their account username and password to the National Social Media Coordinator as part of the account creation and keep that information current.

Regional Twitter account managers throughout the Service are expected to help monitor the USFWS Twitter accounts for signs of unauthorized access or other problems and to alert the relevant Twitter account manager immediately if necessary.

Content Management

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

Official USFWS Twitter accounts must include standard elements in keeping with their status as official outreach products. The exact list and configuration of common elements will be set when the account is created. Account managers wishing to change any of these branding elements must consult with their regional or program social media coordinator or AWSM before proceeding.

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

Text tweets are inherently accessible as long as the end user is getting the tweet on a device that is compatible with assistive technology that person may use. As with other Service content posted on third party sites, content posted to Twitter that cannot be made accessible there must also be available in an accessible form elsewhere and a link to that content prominently displayed at the Twitter account.

3.3 Can the Service post tweets that contain copyrighted material?

Twitter managers should avoid using copyrighted material when possible and must unambiguously acknowledge ownership of any copyrighted content they use. When linking to non-Service websites, tweets must include attribution within the body of the tweet or link to a page that clearly establishes content attribution. Additional information about copyright issues can be found the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Web Standards Handbook under section 2.1.2.

3.4 How will the Service meet its records' retention requirements?

Service tweets are not considered federal records unless they contain information meeting NARA's criteria for federal records that has not already disseminated through other means. Service Twitter managers should understand their record preservation responsibilities and preserve copies of any tweets meeting NARA criteria for federal records.

Vision for the Future

Twitter's immediacy and wide reach will make it an increasingly important communications channel for the Service. As the Service begins using Twitter as a primary means of disseminating mission-related information, rather than a supplemental one, we will need to address the information quality, accessibility, and records implications of our Twitter content. This management plan may require amendment at that time, and the Service may need to implement more formal and encompassing Twitter content management tools and processes.