

Chapter 9 Ready, Set, Present!

- A simple plan
- Package the data
- Basic components
- Ready, set, present!

In the end, your monitoring program is only as good as your data presentation campaign. Until you present, and unless you do it well, you reap few benefits from all your work designing a study, coordinating and training volunteers, doing the field and lab work, and crunching the numbers.

A simple plan

Sure, there's a lot to consider when preparing to communicate data. But the effort needn't be overly complicated. Some programs meet their objectives with a simple report, others may need a multi-front and multimedia campaign. In either case, the planning process is fundamentally the same, and relatively straightforward:

- First, focus your message. Confer with your organization's board, technical advisory committee, and other decision makers. Make sure the data are sound, conclusions reasonable and defensible, and recommendations consistent with the organization's goals.
- Agree on target audiences such as government agencies, general public, town boards, etc.
- Know the target audience—and what they need to know. Are they educated in the science behind the data? Are they likely to care about the problem? And will they pore through a thick report, or do they want the highlight video?
- Identify the major "hits," or presentation opportunities where the message can be delivered. These will vary with the issues, your available resources, and the target audiences.

Package the data

There are many ways to "package" your data to meet different presentation opportunities. We recommend five in particular. Any of these can be effective; together, they make a comprehensive repertoire that will meet most or all outreach objectives.

1. **A written report** can be formal or informal, long or short, and serves as your "bible" or source document.



2. **Reports in your newsletter**, if you have one, are good for keeping the membership knowledgeable. Include some sampling information in every issue such as data graphs and analyses, updates on volunteer activities, or plans for additional monitoring.
3. **Newspaper, other news media stories** are great for general public education campaigns; and whenever your data are “newsworthy,” use the press as a primary communication avenue.
4. **Prepared talks for public meetings** are good when you are trying to get people to act on your recommendations—they are also a good way to reach interest groups. At a minimum, give one talk at the end of the year or end of the survey, but try to do several each year. Vary your audiences from a Lions’ Club dinner to a talk at your organization’s annual meeting to a testimony before a local or state agency.
5. **An exhibit** is a portable display that can tell your story in a library, at an environmental fair, a storefront window, or other public places. A display is good for low-level, broadcast messages that get people thinking about your issues.

Basic components

Identify the basic products or components that would likely be used for these items:

- Graphs, charts and maps that display or give context to your data.
- Slides and photos that complement your data, or show your volunteers in action.
- Fact sheets and narrative blurbs that explain your data.

Reproduce the products in different formats such as a slide, photo, and overhead of the same graph showing sampling results. This helps when you encounter different audiovisual facilities at the places you present.

These form the basic elements of a *Data Presentation Tool Kit*. Mix and match the elements to suit the audience, the event, and the venue. Be sure that others in your organization, such as members or trails and recreation committees, are aware of your kit so that they can use it in their programs.

Ready, set, present!

Now you are ready to go. Schedule your own outreach activities, and be ready for others that come along. When the press calls, when you get invited to speak at the Cattlemen’s Association, or when a permit is up for renewal, you are prepared. Open up your data presentation kit, select the elements that match the situation, and present your data!