

Land management and the media: A team for the future

by Gordon R. Hauglie

Consumers Power Company has decided to explain its land management ideas and policies by using the mass media.

Gordon R. Hauglie is a Field Investigation Supervisor of the Land and Right of Way Department for Consumers Power Company, Jackson, Michigan. A Michigan Chapter 7 member, Hauglie currently serves as the Chapter's Education Committee Chairperson. He has also served as Chairperson for the Chapter's Program Committee and Property Management Committee.

Media is defined as all manner of written material produced for public consumption. Much has been written and said about the current status of America's media industry which has greatly impacted our culture and society. Psychologists have studied the effects of all types of media impact. By far the greatest impact is visual, of which television has the greatest immediate impact on our American way of life.

What does all this have to do with Land Management?

At Consumers Power Company, the Land Department plays an important part in projecting a positive image and promoting public goodwill. Throughout the year, the Land Department and the Public Relations Department work closely to develop press releases on the land management activities of the company. Each release is prepared for publication and audio-visual media.

Examples of these press releases

range from the following:

- Tree planting and restoration practices
- Preservation of wildlife habitats
- Appeal to snowmobilers to respect easement rights-of-way
- Protection of fishing access sites through sales of lands
- Establishment of cooperative community gardens
- Safe hunting areas

Each of these press releases is aimed at a different audience. A specific segment of Michigan's utility customers and ratepayers is targeted.

Much misinformation is readily available to today's citizens. A majority of this "bad news" is handled by word of mouth. Our press releases emphasize the "good news." Thus, the cooperation of the Land and Public Relations Departments results in much useful information being brought to our customers and ratepayers.

This close interdepartmental cooperation has developed as a proactive response to the enormous volume of mail handled by Consumers Power Company. All sorts of inquiries are made on a wide variety of topics concerning land management. Questions range from: "Why can't you stop people from motor-

cycling on your power line right-of-way?" to "Where can my family camp on your lands?"

An almost insurmountable task develops when an investigation must be made on each of these inquiries. However, it is good public relations to answer each with a return letter, and indeed, the majority do get such a letter response. But, to preclude many others from writing and to answer the questions of those who would not write, we have decided to explain our land management ideas and policies by using the mass media.

There is no question as to the value of the assistance of the Public Relations Department to the land management team. The Land Management Supervisor is very aware of the need to inform the public of controversial aspects of our land management policies. A recent case illustrates the value of such cooperation.

A writer from Consumers Power Company's Public Relations Department who was attending an outdoor writer's meeting was contacted by the president of a wildlife preservation group from Michigan's lower peninsula. The preservation group wished to explore the possibility of establishing a new, readily

(see *Media*, pg. 36)



The Queen Mary-Spruce Goose complex — a leased facility from the Port of Long Beach.

terminal operators from all over the United States, and analyzing a multitude of terminal leasing situations made it clear that each leasing method and each pricing approach has its own strengths and weaknesses, its own incentives and disincentives. However, three useful generalizations can be made:

1. If a port's goals and objectives are to maximize throughput and provide benefits to the local economy through increased employment in the maritime industries and the port is willing to substantially subsidize terminal lessees, then the flat rate lease is the most effective vehicle to accomplish these goals and objectives.
2. If a port's goals and objectives are maximization of throughput and employment with minimal potential for subsidization of terminal lessees, then the mini-max lease is the most effective leasing method.

3. If a port's goals and objectives are maximization of profits, employment, and throughput with negligible potential to subsidize terminal lessees, then the revenue sharing lease is the most effective leasing method.

The key to success in any leasing program is to ensure that the port's leasing and pricing strategies are supportive of its goals and objectives. A clearly defined destination is all important!

Notes

1. Discussion with port executives at Los Angeles, Long Beach, and Oakland.
2. Dowd, Thomas J. "Container Terminal Leasing — An Overview." Unpublished paper, March 1982.
3. TEU = the abbreviation for Twenty Foot Equivalent Unit, the common unit used in indicating the capacity of a container ship or terminal.
4. Wharfage = the charge assessed against the cargo passing or conveyed over, onto, or under any wharf.
Dockage = the charge levied against the vessel for berthing space.

5. Glickman, David L. (Consultant to The Port Authority of New York and New Jersey), "Port Planning and Port Pricing," a speech to the American Association of Port Authorities' Port Pricing Conference, January 1982.

6. Discussions with Professor David Olson, University of Washington, Political Science Department.
7. Perry, Ernest L. (Executive Director, Port of Los Angeles), "Pricing Uniformity — Fact and Fiction," a speech to the American Association of Port Authorities' Port Pricing Conference, January 1982.
8. Ibid.


Media (cont. from pg. 27)

accessible wetlands area and wondered whether there would be lands available in the Company's ownership that would be suitable for this purpose.

Because of the close cooperation with the Public Relations Department that had developed from answering hundreds of questions, the Land Management Department quickly became aware of the wildlife preservation group's request. Studies have been developed over the past year. Other departments have been consulted. A package is being prepared for presentation to the group. If they find it suitable for their purposes and accept the Company's offer, a press release will be issued. This release will outline the goals of our joint efforts and will generate a favorable public reaction. Thus, the efforts of many are rewarded in full view of the public.

Looking toward the future, advocates of media use can point to possible sponsorship of TV shows with an outdoor news magazine format. Instead of waiting for the public to find out about projects and the avalanche of questions from curious citizens, why not make plans to anticipate the inquiries and cover the situation by using the media constructively? This is already happening more frequently, due to increasing a Land Department's awareness of media potential.

We have found the media to be a valuable asset. The resultant news is good for our company and the departmental cooperation is good for our customers and ratepayers.



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