

Suggestions to Improve Photos/Videos of OHF Projects

(Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council)

The old adage, “A picture is worth a thousand words” holds true today more than ever. Unfortunately, without proper planning your chances are slim of getting good photos, especially of getting photos that will communicate a timeline of success and future benefits.

The following collection of suggestions from photo journalism professionals are designed to provide you with easy steps to getting better photos. Why? Imagine that a regionally or nationally aired television program wants to produce a show on your OHF projects. They will need photos and/or videos. Do you have them on hand? Are they quality? Do they tell your story? If you can't say yes to all three, you will be out of luck and the story will be about someone or something else. These guidelines are designed so your story is told successfully.

Camera Photo Suggestions (Cell phone cameras & Digital cameras)

1. Always take the highest quality photo you can.

- Whatever camera you are using, set it to capture the highest quality image. All cameras are different, and most take fairly decent photos, so it just takes some tinkering in menus to see what it's set at. Here are web references:

a) For general phone photography guidelines:

www.theschoolofphotography.com/tutorials/how-to-take-good-photos-with-a-phone

b) For iPhone – www.apple.com/iphone/photography-how-to/

- At a minimum, your camera should save the image at 1 meg.

2. Always hold the camera/phone level and still.

- Hold the camera/phone horizontal to allow a landscape view photo.
- Level the camera/phone by orienting the photo with either a horizontal or vertical item that is in the image (like a post, straight tree trunk, or the horizon).
- Keep your hands as still as possible or brace your camera/phone against a stationary object (fence post, rock, tree, etc).

3. Avoid zooming in.

- Smartphone cameras allow you to zoom; however, there are no physical lens that move in to magnify the image. The digital zoom on a phone camera functions more like cropping a photo resulting in loss of detail and producing a low quality photo.
- If you want to zoom in on something, it's better to get physically closer to the object rather than using the zoom function.

4. When saving photos always transfer all info to a computer.

- When transferring the photos to a computer, copy all the media from the camera as is, as to not lose any resolution of the photos.
- When saving photos in a compressed or different format, you may lose some of the quality of the original image.
- DO NOT apply any filters or effects.

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5. Save photos in a common format.

- JPEG, TIF, EPS formats are pretty universally common and work with any editor.

6. Preview the images before sending them out

- If you open the file and it looks rough, it's probably been compressed at some point. If it doesn't look good now, it won't look good later.

7. Plan sequential photos to show the impact of work (before, during, & after)

- For good time-lapse or sequential photos, you will need to take photos from the same location and same vantage point each time.
 - a) Mark the site with a flag, stake, or other semi-permanent marker so your camera's location is the same for each photo regardless of time of year.
 - b) Make sure your camera's vantage point is as close to identical to the previous photo; same line of sight, same elevation, same orientation, same time of day, etc.
- The best sequential photos will provide comparative images as the work proceeds and until it is done.
 - a) Consider taking photos before, during, and after work completion.
 - b) Consider taking photos at each season (spring, summer, fall, winter).
 - c) Consider taking photos showing increased presence of wildlife and increased quality of habitat.
- Photos need to show progress and activity.
 - a) Consider the time of day and season your photos depict. For instance, who wants to see a snow covered view of a restored duck pond, or an enhanced prairie in early spring before anything is starting to grow?
 - b) Attempt to show growth, wildlife presence and activity.

8. Videos

- Keep them short!
- Videos need to be clear, concise, focused, and steady. In other words, who wants to watch a jerky, unfocused, never ending video
- Save your video in .MOV, .MP4, .M4V, or other similar format
- Multiple online video outlets are available for you to display your videos (YouTube, Vimeo, etc.). These can be linked to your website for public viewing.
- Share your video links with LSOHC staff. We can direct viewers to your videos.

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9. Model Releases

- If you are going to show someone's face, you should have their permission in a printed release. Releases should be kept by the Photographer and/or company owning the photo. For photos of children, you should have releases from parents or legal guardians for each child in the photo. Samples of photo release forms are available online.

10. Photo/video Credit

- Every photo or video published should provide credits to the photographer.
- Respect the legal rights of photographers who retain photo copyrights. Always obtain permission for use in publications.

11. THE MOST IMPORTANT TIP OF ALL: "PUSH THE SHUTTER BUTTON"

- Every photo starts with one simple action, Pushing The Button! If you don't take photos you will never get good photos.
- Photos only happen when someone has a camera with them. So, carry a camera with you every time you are in the field. You never know when a picture perfect photo opportunity will present itself, so be ready.
- Great photos can be planned or accidental, but they always result only after the shutter button has been pushed.
- Push the shutter button many times! Take lots of photos! You can erase the bad ones, but good ones will only happen if you push the shutter button.

The OHF work you are part of today will be enjoyed by generations into the future. But, if the story of these incredible OHF projects is not told in such a way as to grab the public's interest, most people will never know what phenomenal resources exist just down the road.

Your story deserves to be told! Who better to tell it than you?

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