

## Roberta Scruggs' Top Ten PR Tips

*Roberta Scruggs graduated from the Medill School of Journalism at Northwestern University and has worked as a reporter and editor at more than a dozen newspapers, ranging from small weeklies to the Miami Herald and Washington Post. In Maine, she has worked for the Maine Sunday Telegram, Portland Press Herald and Lewiston Sun Journal and free-lanced for the Maine Times, Yankee magazine and Down East (magazine and website). In 2004, she began working part-time as membership/outreach director for Lakes Environmental Association, and accepted a full-time position in the organization in 2006.*



1. Create a fact sheet about your lake and lake association (this is good for members and potential members as well as media): How big is the lake? How many members in your association? What are your major concerns and efforts? How many lakefront property holders are around your lake? How do they affect the local economy? Who should be contacted (give email and phone number) with questions?
2. Document your efforts and events. Take lots of photos. If someone finds a suspicious plant ask the details, gather quotes, get photos of the person, the plant, the location. Create a file of good photos (with permissions and photo credit if needed) that can be used for outreach purposes. A good photo shows engaged people (faces!) and beautiful lakes.
3. Keep the attention LOCAL: We are worried about such and such lake; here is why; here is how we are getting people involved.
4. Find out the newspaper/media deadlines. Ask when and to whom you should send (mail or email) or bring your press release.
5. Make sure every press release answers the basic questions: Who? What? Where? When? Why? How?
6. In your press release, tell a story – don't give a report. Imagine you are telling this story to a close friend or relative. Stories should be interesting, engaging and include quotes and anecdotes from people who care about their lake.
7. Be brief! A one-page press release is more likely to be read than a two-page one.
8. Once you send a press release, follow up by calling or visiting someone at the paper. Let him or her know why this matters to the community.
9. Create relationships with local media people (dailies, weeklies, local TV news) so they understand your issues. Try to get them directly involved – most reporters and photographers love to get out on the water.
10. Find the most articulate and engaging speakers in your group and let them talk to the media.