



TIPS ON TAKING BETTER DOCUMENTARY PHOTOS

To ensure that a photograph which documents an environmental situation or problem is easily identified and useable for media, outreach or legal uses, a simple protocol should be used. Think carefully about the **purpose of the photo** (“telling the story” **what, when, where, why & who**), as well as some basic logistics.

Here is a list of **4 SIMPLE STEPS** to remember to document alongside the photo:

1. Date & Time taken
2. Location of photograph (area, event name, physical address, etc...)
3. Name and title for each individual in photo
4. Photographer (your) name & your contact info

Note 1: If you are shooting with a digital camera, be sure that the calendar and clock on the camera are set properly. Remember to make changes for Daylight Savings and for different time zones.

*Note 2: One way to ensure that none of this information is forgotten is by photographing a “SLATE” with all of this important information. This can be a simple white card or piece of paper with clearly printed (with a large sharpie) text. **Don’t forget the date, location and time of photo.***

Note 3: If photographing people, a release form must be signed. Click [here](#) to access CWFNC’s media release form. You can photograph or scan the release to include with your photo (copy or CD).

When taking the photograph, here are **6 PICTURE TAKING TIPS**:

1. **Remain steady!** Plant both feet on the ground and take & hold your breath as you click the shutter (this will help keep camera steady and photo clear.)
2. **Compose with care!** Add the surrounding environment and context (adjacent buildings, roads, bridges, signs, etc....) and make sure the horizon is level. Try and include items which establish scale.
3. **Look at the light!** Remember early morning or late afternoon sun is best.
4. **Cover your bases!** Take more than one picture of the same location. You can even take a photo from all four directions (NSEW) at 90° angles.
5. **Move in closer!** Document the activity or environmental problem in more detail by zooming in.
6. **Focus and exposure!** Be mindful of the cropping (what is included) and how the image is composed (try to have subject not be in middle of picture).

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