



How to:

Write a Letter to the Editor

DEAR NATIONAL PARK ADVOCATE,

Writing a letter to the editor of a newspaper is a powerful way to voice your concerns about issues affecting national parks. It doesn't need to be as scary as it sounds. Just follow these simple steps to share your concerns about national parks.

Thank you for showing your support for national parks!

Sincerely,

Your friends at NPCA



5 STEPS FOR WRITING A LETTER TO THE EDITOR

1.) RESEARCH

2.) WRITE

3.) EDIT

4.) SEND

5.) NEXT STEPS

1.) Research

Respond to a Recent Article Pertaining to National Parks

- ▶ An article has appeared in a national, regional or local publication that provokes a response from you. If the topic does not interest you, it will be difficult to effectively respond to it.
 - ▶ Your response to the article may either be positive or negative.
 - ▶ For example:
 - "Yay, parks received more funding; this is awesome!"
- OR**
- "Boo, parks are being exploited and de-funded; this is horrible!"

The More Recent, The Better

- ▶ Respond to the article within a week of its publication date. The relevancy and timeliness of the article will make your letter more appealing to the editor.

National or Local Newspaper?

- ▶ Keep your options open.
 - ▶ National newspapers receive hundreds of letters, so the competition might be greater.
 - ▶ More local papers might be more willing to publish any letter submitted, but they could have limited capacity to cover an issue.
 - ▶ If you attend a university or community college, look into the option of submitting a letter to the editor of your campus paper.
 - ▶ Whatever you decide, just make sure you respond to the same outlet that printed your source article.

IMPORTANT: Review the newspaper's Letter to the Editor guidelines online before moving to the next step.

2.) Write

Start with Your Heading

- ▶ Include the date, your name, home address, phone number and e-mail address.
- ▶ For your salutation, address the editor directly by simply saying “Dear Editor.”

Keep Your Letter Short & Sweet!

- ▶ Newspapers rarely publish lengthy letters, so your letter needs to get to the point, fast. Shoot for **no more than 200 words**.
- ▶ Refer to the original article within the first sentence or two, and then quickly establish your position.

Keep it Focused

- ▶ You may want to address several topics from the article, but focus on your most important point.

Stick to the Facts

- ▶ Include statistics, recent events, other articles, quotes or relevant data to provide evidence to support your stance on the issue.
- ▶ Check out our [Resources](#) page for some key talking points or research your own!

2.) Write

Add a Personal Touch

- ▶ The most memorable letters to the editor show your personal attachment to the issue. Share a story about how this issue relates to you. For example, what do the national parks mean to you? Do you have a favorite memory from a national park site? How have you experienced the need for more park funding?

Drop Names

- ▶ Don't be afraid to name a specific company, legislator* or agency that is relevant to the situation, especially if mentioned in the source article.
- ▶ Often, companies or legislators have staff that mine the media looking for mention of their names. Including their names in your letter means you are more likely to get their attention and maybe even a response.

***Don't know your legislator? Look up your representative online:**
whoismyrepresentative.com

Call to Action

- ▶ Address the issue and propose a real solution. This could mean telling an individual or organization what action to take or directing the readers themselves to take action.

End with a Strong Closing

- ▶ Reiterate your main point succinctly, but leave no doubt as to your position.
- ▶ Close with "Sincerely," and then sign your name.

3.) Edit

Make It Clear & Concise

- ▶ Be direct. In such a short letter, you can't afford to waste words.
- ▶ Add urgency in your call to action and express certainty in your opinion.
 - ▶ For example:
 - **INSTEAD OF:** "I think these places are very important to our country, and they should not be treated this way."
 - **TRY:** "This is no way to treat some of our country's most important places."

Be Appropriate

- ▶ Maintain a respectful, professional tone even when disagreeing with an article.
- ▶ Write your letter in a way that the general public will understand (i.e., do not use acronyms, abbreviations, slang or jargon).

4.) Send

Submit Your Letter!*

▶ Email?

- ▶ Most newspapers have a specific email address for people to send letters to the editor. Look for this on their website.
- ▶ Copy and paste your letter in the body of your email message. Don't forget to include your heading with your contact information.
- ▶ DO NOT send your letter as an attachment; editors are less likely to open it.

▶ Online submission form?

- ▶ Simply copy and paste your letter into the form, and fill out the contact information requested.

▶ Postal mail?

- ▶ Most newspapers don't want to re-type a letter or wait for a letter to be sent through the mail, so this is unlikely to be required. However, if your local newspaper still requires it, send it through the mail.

***Refer to the newspaper's website on how to submit your letter to the editor.**

5.) Next Steps

If your letter gets published...

- ▶ The newspaper outlet may or may not notify you before your letter is published. So, keep an eye on the Letters to the Editor section!
- ▶ Don't be alarmed if your letter seems edited. Newspapers reserve the right to do so to maintain clarity and conciseness.
- ▶ Share the publication of your letter with others! The more people spread the message, the more awareness you bring to the issue.

If your letter does not get published...

- ▶ Don't give up! Try again by responding to another article or submitting a new letter to another newspaper outlet.
- ▶ Don't be discouraged. The simple act of submitting your opinion, amplifies others who may share the same point. The more articles submitted that agree with each other (or that contribute to a robust public dialogue), the more likely an editor will pick one to publish to reflect public opinion.

Additional Resources

Fact Sheets

- ▶ NPCA has many resources available [online](#) that you can use to research whichever topic interests you.

Need a little more guidance?

- ▶ Check out an example letter to the editor on the following page!

Still feel nervous about writing your own letter to the editor?

- ▶ Submit some details [here](#) about why you care about national parks and NPCA staff will help write one based on your responses!

Example

National Park Letter to the Editor Example:

Glades water

In response to the Feb. 3 *Miami Herald* article, "Is Florida moving too slow to save the Everglades?"

Yes, we must move faster and, no, it's not too late. Over the past decade, we have seen unprecedented progress in moving Everglades restoration forward, but we need a source of new water to flow.

State Senate President Joe Negron's plan to purchase 60,000 acres of land south of Lake Okeechobee for water storage and to send water south is the best common-sense solution.

Florida's waters are in crisis. Everglades National Park and the Florida Keys are starved for fresh water while the northern estuaries are pummeled with polluted overflows from Lake Okeechobee. Too much water north, too little water south.

We cannot fix the problem without sending water south. In spite of the restoration progress being made, we cannot restore the Everglades without reclaiming the natural flow of fresh water in a way that is thoughtful and safe for the surrounding 'Glades communities.

Money is already available to buy the land thanks to Florida's Water and Land Legacy, which was overwhelmingly supported by voters to preserve our natural resources.

We have the plan and the money. We need political will to make it happen.

CARA CAPP, HOLLYWOOD, FL

Refers to original article

Note the name drop

Lays out supporting details

Refers to specific policy

Clearly gives opinion of best solution

Highlights key background info

Urgent and strong closing