



**Save Our Cypress Campaign
Action Manual:**

Arbor Day of Action- April 27th, 2007

www.saveourcypress.org



**SAVE OUR CYPRESS
COALITION** WWW.SAVEOURCYPRESS.ORG

Thanks for joining the Save Our Cypress Campaign to help protect the Gulf Coast by participating in the Arbor Day of Action. This Action Manual has all the information you'll need to know about the issue and the campaign and how to start your own local Save Our Cypress Campaign.

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The Save Our Cypress Campaign

The Gulf Restoration Network and Save Our Cypress Coalition is publicly demanding Wal-Mart, Home Depot, and Lowe's to immediately stop selling cypress mulch! You can help stop the rapid loss of cypress forests, and this Action Packet will provide the tools you need to successfully organize your own Save Our Cypress Campaign and a great event for the Arbor Day of Action on April 27, 2007.

Louisiana's endangered cypress swamps are being clear-cut to feed an unsustainable and unnecessary mulch industry. Major retailers have a great opportunity to live up to their policies of sustainability by ending needless cypress deforestation and helping to restore balance to our coast. Wal-Mart, Home Depot, and Lowe's must immediately stop selling all cypress mulch products in favor of sustainable alternatives.

Cypress swamps provide valuable natural storm protection. After hurricanes Katrina and Rita, the need for wetlands to prevent massive flooding from storm surge has never been more evident. Cypress and tupelo are also very resistant to wind creating a strong barrier for coastal communities.

Threatened and endangered wildlife, like the recently rediscovered ivory-billed woodpecker and the Louisiana black bear, make their homes in these magnificent trees.

Louisiana's wetlands have tremendous ecological, economic, cultural, and recreational value. The majority of North America's migratory birds pass through these forests as they follow the Mississippi flyway. Swamp tours and eco-tourism teach present-day adventurers about places like the Atchafalaya Basin while simultaneously spurring economic growth. The music and stories of the unique Cajun culture are rooted in the swamps. Cypress forests play a key role in literally holding together this rapidly deteriorating land.



Cypress Forests

Coastal wetland forests are ecologically and economically valuable areas that represent some of the most biologically diverse areas on earth, and cypress have become legendary trees of the Deep South with their majestic stature, "knees", and Spanish moss-covered crowns. The bald cypress is the most familiar species and the focus of our efforts. Bald

cypress is native to much of the southeastern United States from Delaware down to Texas and up the Mississippi as far as Indiana. The trees are deciduous conifers that are highly flood resistant and grow in freshwater swamps and along rivers and bayous. They are an ancient species that is distantly related to sequoias and redwoods. The slow-growing trees can live to be thousands of years old, reaching heights of 130 feet and diameters of 30 feet.

Cypress wood was once prized for its rot and insect resistant properties and logged extensively, but the young trees of today no longer display such characteristics. At the turn of the last century, cypress throughout the southeast was heavily logged for lumber to make boat hulls, home siding, cabinets, furniture, and other value-added products. Unfortunately, many of the swamps, including all of Louisiana's old-growth cypress, was logged out. Louisiana was estimated to have 2 million acres of cypress at the beginning of the 20th century, and that is now reduced to 800,000 acres.

With much of the old-growth already gone, a growing market for cypress mulch greatly reduces the chance that the second growth trees, which are currently 80 -100 years old, will ever reach the stature of their ancestors.

Natural Storm and Flooding Protection

Storm surge rushing over the surface of the Gulf of Mexico moves unabated, but as it looks ahead toward the cypress forests ashore, it sees a gray wall. Entering the forest, the force is confused right out of the surge as it tries to make its way around the thousands of defenders. Approximately every mile of cypress forests reduces the storm surge height by a foot.



Cypress swamps are the best natural storm protection that exists along the Gulf coast, and they are uniquely situated to reduce the impacts of flooding. Wetlands, in general, are incredibly important for reducing the impact of hurricanes. Hurricane Katrina passed over only a few miles of wetlands before slamming the city of New Orleans and 1,800 people died. Hurricane



Rita, by contrast, had to travel over 35 miles of wetlands before reaching civilization, and seven people died. Unfortunately, the salt marsh portion of that was utterly destroyed. Combined, the two hurricanes caused the disappearance of 217 square miles of wetlands.

Close examination shows that cypress forests fared very well, and only around 10% of the trees came down in the violent winds. This compares with 80% fall rate for trees in bottomland hardwood forests (oak, maple, gum, ash). Cypress

forests were protection for those hurricanes and will be for the next and the next, and with the effects of global warming, we need to be ready.

Habitat for Threatened and Endangered Species

Cypress forests provide habitat for threatened and endangered species and are an important stop for neo-tropical migrants. The recently rediscovered ivory-billed woodpecker, the Holy Grail of the birding world, is found in cypress swamps. The bird has survived unseen for over 50 years, but its existence will be pushed over the brink without this habitat. Other creatures you'll find living and working in cypress forests include the Louisiana black bear, the bald eagle, and the Florida panther.



About sixty percent of all North American birds (362 species) use the Mississippi Flyway, that focuses to a point in the cypress forests of Louisiana. From the coast of Venezuela to the Yucatan peninsula, over 60 species of neo-tropical migrants, nearly the entire eastern songbird population and several western species, will stop on the Gulf coast after their long flight across the Gulf.

Cypress Mulch

The cypress mulch industry has become an imminent threat to the Gulf's swamps, and much of Florida's pristine cypress habitat has already fallen victim to demand for a product fueled by myth. Cypress mulch does not provide a product with any superior attributes, and sustainable alternatives abound. Pine straw stays in place better, pine bark nuggets last just as long, eucalyptus is a more effective weed deterrent, and none of these options destroy the Gulf coast ecosystem.

Traditionally, cypress mulch was a by-product of lumbering and the old trees and heartwood had impressive rot and insect resistance. Today, young trees that have yet to develop those characteristics are being felled just to make cypress mulch. The Save Our Cypress Coalition has extensive evidence documenting that whole clear-cuts and entire trees are going straight to the mulch grinder.

Myths surrounding the benefits of using modern cypress mulch in gardens have created a tremendous demand for it. Unfortunately, they are just myths. Consumers are being cheated and our swamps are being needlessly destroyed.

-Cypress mulch is NOT more insect resistant.

Old-growth cypress was rot and termite resistant, but mulch from today's younger trees is not.

-Cypress mulch is NOT more durable than alternatives. Again, this may have been true of old-growth trees. Today, even one inch saplings are ground for mulch, and they don't have the 'heartwood' prized in the past for its resilience.

-Cypress mulch is NOT more float resistant. The logging company Corbitt calls its cypress mulch "NoFloat", but it's not true. Try it.

-Cypress mulch is NOT more aromatic and weed resistant. All mulches have aromatic compounds that resist weed germination. Pine straw can suppress weeds for up to one year, but cypress mulch and others work only two to three months.

-Cypress mulch does NOT come from trees that will grow back. This is the biggest myth of them all. Scientists have shown that most Louisiana coastal cypress swamps will not grow back once cut.



Along with pine straw, pine bark nuggets, and eucalyptus other good alternatives include melaleuca mulch, recycled sugar cane, cedar mulch, pecan shells, and rakings from your yard.

Cypress Regeneration

Concerns about cypress regeneration are long-standing throughout the Gulf, and the major losses in acreage since the first major round of logging suggest difficulty for cypress regeneration.

In Louisiana, the recent Governor's Science Working Group Coastal Wetland Forest Conservation and Use report has concluded that many modern cypress swamps will not regenerate once cut.

Enormous changes in the wetland ecosystem and hydrology threaten the trees. Many questions remain regarding where, if anywhere, cypress forests can be sustainably logged in Louisiana. Sadly, logging companies and mulch distributors continue grinding away our natural storm protection without waiting for the necessary answers.



Cypress By The Numbers

5 of 5- Number of Gulf states with cypress swamps

129,000- Tons of cypress mulch produced annually in Florida (47% of all cypress products)

2.2 million- Estimated acres of cypress forests in Louisiana prior to 1900

791,000- Acres of cypress forests in Louisiana today

0- Acres of old-growth cypress remaining in Louisiana

231,000- Acres of cypress swamps in Louisiana could be lost in the next 50 years to factors other than logging

200,000- Acres of cypress swamps have been expressly desired by mulch producers

20.1 vs. 17.3- Millions of cubic feet of cypress cut in Florida each year vs. natural regrowth

130 by 30- Height and diameter (in feet) of an old-growth cypress tree

80 to 100- Average age (in years) of trees in Louisiana today



Wal-Mart, Home Depot and Lowe's

Wal-Mart, Home Depot, and Lowe's are responsible for fueling destruction of cypress forests because they distribute and sell massive amounts of cypress mulch throughout the country.

Wal-Mart, Home Depot, and Lowe's all claim that their cypress mulch is sustainable and never sourced from coastal Louisiana or endangered forests. That's just not true. All three companies have been presented evidence of the forest destruction that their products create, yet they choose to believe shady suppliers who, in order to preserve their profits, tell them that no endangered forests are being felled. The true sustainability of any cypress forest in the Gulf is questionable when logging of this scope occurs, yet Wal-Mart, Home Depot, and Lowe's continue to promote destruction of the forests. All the while they tell us not to worry; it's fine.

Wal-Mart, Home Depot, and Lowe's have the power to greatly reduce needless destruction of cypress forests in Louisiana and throughout the country by simply opting to sell more sustainable mulch products. The combined purchasing power of the three retailers is enormous, and they can leverage that power to keep the Gulf's coastal protection from being ground away. Unfortunately, all three companies, when presented with the evidence of unsustainable logging that destroys important swamps in Louisiana, have refused to take the necessary steps to stop the practice

Paradoxically, the three largest retailers who sell cypress garden mulch have all adopted corporate policies aimed at protecting the environment. It is now up to us to enforce those policies through focused, strategic grassroots action.

The Save Our Cypress Coalition

To combat the loss of cypress forests in Louisiana and beyond, a group of Louisiana organizations came together as the Save Our Cypress Coalition. The founding members are: Gulf Restoration Network, Atchafalaya Basinkeeper, Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana, Delta Chapter of the Sierra Club, Lake Pontchartrain Basin Foundation, Louisiana Audubon Council, Louisiana Purchase Cypress Legacy, Louisiana Environmental Action Network, and the Lower Mississippi Riverkeeper. Other national and regional groups like the Waterkeeper Alliance, the Sierra Club, ForestEthics, and the Dogwood Alliance have also helped out, and student groups throughout the Gulf have been very involved.

Now we need you!

Our Vision

We see a sustainable Gulf Coast and a healthy Gulf of Mexico. Natural resources are cherished and treated with respect to their inherent value, not just economic output. Fish are plentiful and safe to eat; cypress forests provide habitat for endangered species and protect coastal communities; people swim and fish in the streams and lakes; and global warming disasters have been averted. Corporations are conscious of the public good when making their decisions and have helped to remedy the environmental scars left from years of exploitation. The only way to arrive where we want to be is together, a Gulf-wide grassroots movement.

Grassroots Organizing

Organizing is empowering people to take collective action and work together to create positive change. While we do not have the financial resources to combat destructive corporations, we do have something even more powerful: the power of the people united for a common goal. Time and time again, people win battles that they thought seemed impossible because of strong organizing. There are many tools that are effective in grassroots organizing, such as tabling and coalition building.

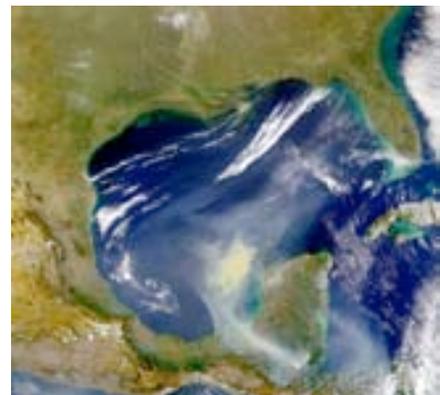
Start Your Own Save Our Cypress Campaign

Wal-Mart, Home Depot, and Lowe's incredible size and cypress purchasing means that they have severe effects on forests throughout the Gulf states and beyond. At least one of these retail giants is in almost every community where concerned citizens are getting involved in this grassroots campaign. Activists are launching efforts challenging the retailers at the local level. By developing grassroots efforts directly at the point of consumption, activists can link the local act of product consumption with the global threat of forest destruction.

April 27, 2007 is the Save Our Cypress Arbor Day of Action and it's the perfect way to kick off your local Save Our Cypress Campaign. Ideas and plans for actions are below, and here are some easy steps to build the movement leading up to the Day of Action and beyond.

Postcard Campaign

Collecting postcards to deliver in bulk to corporate CEO's asking them to stop selling cypress mulch is a great way to introduce people to the issue and get them involved. Sample postcards are in the materials section, and you can request them in different formats from dan@healthygulf.org.



To start your postcard campaign, look to the “low-hanging fruit”- friends, family, conservation-minded acquaintances, members of your garden club, hiking buddies, whomever. Talk to them at dinner, get together, meetings, at work and make sure everyone signs a postcard. The postcards give you the information you’ll need to get in touch with people to keep them involved. When you get a stack of cards, you can send copies of the cards to us for delivery at corporate HQ’s and drop the cards off at your local retailer.

When you’re ready to expand from there, one useful tactic is to set up a table in “high-traffic area” (where there are a lot of people coming by) with information specific to your campaign, sit there or stand in front of it, and talk to people who stop at it about the issue. Tabling is useful in educating people, recruiting people to help in your campaign, and encouraging people to take action on an issue. It is good to have petitions or postcards at your table to sign, and handouts that they can take home with them.

Handwritten letters are also an incredibly effective way of getting our message to Wal-Mart, Home Depot, and Lowe’s. There are sample letters in the materials section. Your most dedicated activists can sign a postcard and then write a whole letter to deliver on April 27th.

Coalition Building

In order to gain more support for your campaign, you ask other groups that may be interested to help you and form a coalition (and expand the Save Our Cypress Coalition). A coalition is a group of organizations formed around a certain issue. When looking for groups, consider a wide range of possibilities. Asking coalition group members to sign postcards or write letters is a good place to start, and then you can ask groups to share resources, contacts, write letters in support of your campaign, or collaborate with the media. Reaching out to other social change groups helps you to gain a broader perspective on environmental protection and helps build the movement.



Arbor Day of Action, April 27th



Few people connect Wal-Mart, Home Depot, and Lowe’s cypress mulch to forest destruction. As activists, we can portray that story in ways that engage the hearts and minds of the public, and Arbor Day is the perfect opportunity to draw the public’s attention to the dangers of cypress mulch.

For this Arbor Day of Action, people all over the Gulf and the country will descend upon Wal-Mart, Home Depot, and Lowe's stores to demand an end to the sale of cypress mulch. Whether you come with friends and the media in tow for a huge event or you just stop by a store to drop off a letter to the manager, everyone can participate. Our combined effort will have a huge impact in moving these companies toward real sustainability for the Gulf Coast.

Effective store actions show people (including the manager and employees) the destructive nature of cypress mulch as well as engaging them to take concrete action. They are also fun and entertaining both to create and to watch. The key is to be creative, and share your successes. If you have good ideas pass them along so others can use it as well.

Action Suggestions: Many of these ideas can be combined, i.e. a great media-demonstration-delivery event.

A.) **Present a cypress sapling to Wal-Mart, Home Depot, or Lowe's:** Celebrate Arbor Day by offering the stores a whole version of what they sell ground up in their garden department. Hand the manager a sapling and a happy Arbor Day card. Bring music and banners that make the action look like a ceremony.

B.) **Write letters in your town to the CEOs:** Lee Scott (Wal-Mart), Robert Niblock (Lowe's), and Frank Blake (Home Depot) and hand deliver them on April 27th.

C.) **Hold a classic demonstration:** Outside the store, bring colorful signs, posters, and banners. Hand out information sheets to customers who walk in the store and ask them to sign a postcard.

D.) **Perform gardening demonstrations:** Show onlookers how to use sustainable mulches and explain why cypress mulch is not an option. Bring a red wagon and demonstrate how to plant a cypress sapling in it and use pine straw mulch around the newly planted tree.

E.) **Organize a press conference:** Invite people involved in the campaign from your area to speak about Wal-Mart, Home Depot, Lowe's and Gulf Coast forest destruction. Then send out press releases and invite the media to come.

F.) **Forest Animal Visit:** If Wal-Mart, Home Depot and Lowe's have taken the trees out of our forests and moved them into their stores, why not bring the rest of the forests to their aisles as well? Dress up as various forest animals and set up for the day in your local store. Or bring the stumps that Home Depot, Wal-Mart, and Lowe's leaves in every forest when they finish with it.

G.) **Have a carnival at your local store.** Make your demo fun with games like "pin the chainsaw on the tree", clowns, and balloons.

H.) **Involve younger children:** It's the youngest generations that lose the most from forest destruction. Ask local elementary school teachers if you can give presentations on



forests, and at the end have students paint pictures of forests that say, “Lowe’s (or Wal-Mart, or Home Depot), Please stop destroying the Gulf Coast.” Give them to the store manager or send them to the CEO.

I.) **Visually connect forest destruction with Lowe’s, Home Depot and Wal-Mart.** Slip pictures of clearcuts into stacks of mulch, or onto shelves. Pass out stickers with the Save Our Cypress campaign logo (coming soon!).

J.) **In-Store Returns.** Fill shopping carts with cypress mulch and bring it to the counter. As you are unloading it, ask the clerk if the mulch comes from endangered forests. If they don’t know, tell them you don’t want to buy forest destruction and end the sale. If they say “no”, ask them to prove it. It is completely impossible for them to do that, so end the sale.

K.) **Hang a banner:** Make it big, colorful and on message. Get it in a perfect spot for the media and for pictures!

L.) **In Store Announcements:** Make an announcement that old growth forests are currently in aisle 9 (or something to that effect) over the intercom, with a bullhorn, or in a loud voice!



Action Tips:

- Spectacle=message. Your action should convey your message that Wal-Mart’s, Home Depot’s, and Lowe’s cypress mulch destroys forests. The skit itself and the message should connect so observers can see the action and understand why you’re demonstrating.
- Tell a story. Street theater should have a plot, characters, props/visuals, and a setting. Many stories have a villain, a victim and a hero. (i.e., Lowe’, forest critters or communities, and a super-hero with a catchy name).
- Create simple images that repeat. Make the plot easy to follow, and easy to understand. You can make easy props with cloth or cardboard, paint, and a staple gun. Label your props with signs so that your audience knows what they are.
- Create scenes that look great in photos. Imagine yelling “Stop” during your skit, does that image get out your message? Photos do exactly this; they freeze your skit and memorialize your action in one single image. Make sure that image tells a story and

explicitly says things like, “Wal-Mart destroys coastal forests” or “Home Depot: Clearcuts on Sale Now!” or “Lowe’s: Grinding Away Our Natural Storm Protection.”

- Make it fun and interactive. Empower other demonstrators by allowing them to participate also. Create excitement so a crowd gathers. Create settings and a tone that welcome people into your action.
- Visuals should be colorful and big. One huge banner is a much better visual than dozens of smaller signs. Also, regardless of the size of your groups, clump them together rather than spreading people out. Remember the frozen image created by photography.
- **Record your event!** Make sure to take pictures and even video to show the impact of your actions. Please share your photos with us, it’s inspiring to see you out there, and it helps build the national network. Tell us what you do so we can give ideas to others and track our progress. We will also show corporate executives the campaign activities.

Roles to fill for day of Action:

- **Liaison** with store manager: deliver the letter, interact with employees
- **Leader of chants**
- **Fliers**—1 person point on this, everyone working on it
- **Postcards**—1 person point on this, everyone working on it
- **Media:** have press release and talking points handy
- **Photographer/Videographer**
- **Police Liaison-** Someone calm and articulate who can communicate with security and/or police if necessary.

Ideas for Banners/Signs

“Don’t Clear-Cut Our Coast:
Stop Selling Cypress Mulch”

“Home Depot: Don’t Turn Our Best Natural
Storm Protection Into Mulch”

“Cypress Trees Protect Us From Flooding:
Don’t Sell Cypress Mulch”

“Lowe’s: Your Cypress Mulch Harms Coastal
Louisiana”

“Cypress Mulch Comes From Endangered
Forests- Don’t Sell It”

“Wal-Mart Is Destroying the Gulf Coast”

Event Checklist

The following is a helpful checklist of the things you should do before the event. This means that many of these things should be done in the weeks before. Check out the media checklist below too.

THREE TO FOUR WEEKS BEFORE EVENT

- Speak at events, table at other events, and generate lists of interested volunteers.
- Call other environmental and other interested groups in the area and invite them.
- Send out an invitation to any e-mail lists.

TWO WEEKS BEFORE

- Decide what your action will be, make all props and write skits.
- Plan a schedule for the event- set time(s) and specific meeting place(s) for the event.
- DO A SITE CHECK! Scout out the store and determine where people should stand, where signs should be held, etc.

ONE WEEK BEFORE

- Finish materials like banners and signs.
- Call those who said they were interested and ask them to your event (and to come help make props beforehand.)
- Create visibility around your event by poster and chalking.
- Finalize specific roles in the event such as police liaison, media spokesperson, chant leader, etc.
- Finalize your own program and agenda in detail.

Are you entering the store to do a tour? Are you postcarding for the entire time? Do you have any drummers to add music to the event? Do you have a press conference planned? Have you rehearsed your skits? Whatever it is—decide what you’re doing, practice, and tell people the game plan when they arrive.

- PRACTICE, especially if you’re doing street theatre or expecting the media.

TWO DAYS BEFORE

- Call and confirm all the people who said they’d be there.
- Site check your location again to make sure nothing’s changed.
- Coordinate transportation to and from event.
- Develop a back-up plan in case you get asked to leave. Unlikely as it may be, if this does happen, you can always go to the sidewalk in front of the parking lot, or go to another store in your area. Either way, be prepared!
- Go over schedule with participants, make sure everyone who needs training is trained
- Play the “what if” game and be prepared for every possible situation

THE DAY OF THE ACTION

- Have enough postcards to sign/materials to hand out (at least 200-250.)

__ Bring clipboards for postcards.

If you don't have enough or any clipboards, then bring pieces of cardboard with rubber bands wrapped around them – they work just as well.

__ Have fun!

AFTER THE EVENT

__ Send pictures and a brief description of your action to the GRN, so we can track the cumulative impacts of the campaign!

__ Write letters to the CEO's of the company and tell them about your event

Know Your Rights

Protests and demonstrations have created social and environmental change throughout history. From the Boston Tea Party to the Montgomery Bus Boycott to the Labor Rights Movement -- and the Home Depot Old Growth campaign -- non-violent direct action has played a crucial role in exposing injustices and winning important victories. These actions allow us to exercise our basic rights as U.S. citizens as well as participate more fully in the democratic process. Most importantly, nonviolent direct action is empowering because it works.

However, it is important to know your basic rights before you hit the streets. Wal-Mart, Home Depot, and Lowe's stores and usually their parking lots are private property. Before you go, appoint someone to talk to the police and manager and tell them what you are doing and why you are there. Be courteous and respectful to all authority. This can work in your favor many times. If you have a demonstration at the store, the manager might come out and ask you to leave. Not leaving can result in arrest. However, at most demonstrations thus far, demonstrators have been permitted to stay, especially if you stress that you are going to leave at a certain time. Arrests result in bad publicity for the store. Most demonstrations encounter few problems with the police.

It helps to have a back-up plan. You can hit another store or take your event out to the sidewalk. Even if you are asked to leave, you can buy time by talking to the manager and police.

The following is not meant to be legal advice, nor comprehensive, but should provide some things to think about before planning an action:

- Appointing a police liaison to speak with them is generally beneficial. A police liaison conveys information between the police and the group. The police liaison should be articulate, calm, and able to communicate with the police as well as able to de-escalate the situation as much as possible.
- Always use your judgment. Remember to be safe and keep your group safe.
- Remember that rights do not always equal reality.

If you would like more information on legal issues, there are many activist legal collectives including the: Midnight Special Law Collective: <http://www.midnightspecial.net/>, The Just Cause Law Collective: <http://www.lawcollective.org/>, and the New York City People's Law Collective: <http://www.tao.ca/~nycplc/>

Also, the American Civil Liberties Union has lawyers all over the country that work to protect our rights and freedoms, <http://www.aclu.org>.

The National Lawyers Guild is also a good resource, www.nlg.org.

Mobilizing Media Momentum

Gaining media coverage around the campaign is critical to alert the public about Wal-Mart, Home Depot, and Lowe's forest destruction and pressure them publicly by documenting all of the grassroots actions organized throughout the country against their company. The key to gaining media attention is to hold exciting events that engage reporters. Just like activists, most reporters don't like to be bored. Have fun and be creative when telling your story, and get ready to see your story in the paper the next day!

Tips for Getting Great Media:

- Create a plan. Gaining media attention is like running any other campaign. You need to decide who to target, what influences them, and a step by step plan to reach your goal. Attached at the end of this section is a media checklist.
- Build relationships with reporters. Much of the news is based on the individual preferences of a reporter. Use your events to get to know reporters and find out what interests them. Read the stories they write. Use that knowledge to "spin" a story. Are they interested in forest protection? Students and young people? Corporate citizenship? Find out their deadline and be considerate. Finally, don't just stop at one reporter. Sometimes talking to several reporters helps you distinguish which ones are most interested in your story.
- Write effective news advisories and news releases. A news advisory states who, what, where, when and why of an event. Send it out 2-3 days before an event to place an event on a reporter's schedule. A news release is the story you would want written about your event. Hand it out at your event and send it to reporters soon after your event ends.
- Create a message and stick to it. Tie it to the area where you are, and make it simple and concise. Most importantly, practice your talking points before your demonstration. For example, a simple 3- part message could be the following:
 - 1) Cypress forests are the best natural storm protection for the Gulf Coast, and they are being clear-cut to make cypress garden mulch,
 - 2) Wal-Mart, Home Depot, and Lowe's are promoting forest destruction by selling cypress mulch when other sustainable alternatives exist
 - 3) Citizens from throughout your town have gathered at Home Depot (or Lowe's or Wal-Mart) to demand they stop selling cypress mulch

Return to one of your major points with every statement you make to reporters. Remember that you don't have to answer all the questions that the media asks you. If you are unable to answer a question, just go back to your message.

- Have a couple of people appointed that deal primarily to the media. Everyone should be prepared to talk, but these are the people that you point reporters to initially. Media liaisons should be articulate, knowledgeable, and on message.

Do It Yourself Media

Sometimes the corporate media outlets you faxed your press releases to don't show up. Or they misquote you or take a segment of your sound bite out of context. This, of course, doesn't mean that the word won't get out about your action. You can be your own media and document your hard work and creativity. Be sure to bring a camera or more to actions and afterwards write your own articles about your fabulous demonstration to distribute and publish.

With the Internet, the opportunities to create your own media are endless. Blogs, social networking sites, YouTube- all of them are a great ways of reaching the public with our message to protect cypress forests. Independent media sites like www.indymedia.org have great websites where you can publish stories, articles, and pictures. Be creative and stay on message, and then watch your campaign "go viral". Make sure to send the Gulf Restoration Network a link too so we can see it!

You can also write articles and submit them to your local paper. It is usually much easier to get them into smaller, and more local publications. Other options include writing a letter to the editor, or writing an opinion piece that is featured, more commonly called Op-Ed.

Media Checklist

ONE OR TWO WEEKS BEFORE EVENT

__ Get a media outlet list from your area.

You can look in the phone book for the media outlets, and ask for the "environmental reporter," or call one of the local environmental groups and they're sure to lend you their list.

__ Prepare media advisory and press release (samples for the Arbor Day of Action are coming soon.)

THREE DAYS BEFORE EVENT

__ Fax the advisory to the media, and call reporters about the event.

In your phone calls, you'll have about 30 seconds to tell them the WHO-WHAT-WHEN-WHERE-WHY of the event, and then they'll ask you to fax your advisory. Think about your pitch and practice it with a friend a few times to warm up.

__ Call the AP and get the event in their "Daybook."

The Associated Press of your state circulates to all the media outlets in your area a schedule of events for each day. Find their number in the phone book or information, and tell them you have an event for the daybook.

__ Prepare press packets.

Include your press release and fact sheets provided as an information packet to the press.

__ Designate media liaison and greeters, and have a set of people prepared to deliver the message to any reporters that come. Practice fielding questions from the media and role-play sound-bites and answers.

TWO DAYS BEFORE EVENT

__ Call all the reporters you didn't get in touch with yesterday.

MORNING ON DAY OF ACTION

- Call through media contacts once again.
- Bring press packets and a sign-in sheet for reporters who attend event.

AFTER THE ACTION

- After your event, send out your release to any reporters who did not attend, and follow up with all reporters.
- Post your event to the web the best way you know how.
- Look for coverage of your event on the news or in your paper. Record and clip articles.
- Write Op-Eds and Letters to the Editor.

For media work, we'll be following up soon with sample press releases and advisories and conference call trainings. Watch your email to stay up-to-date.

Organizing Materials

Sample Letter to Store Manager

*Your address
City, State, Zip
Date*

*Wal-Mart, Home Depot, or Lowe's
Address
City, State, Zip*

Dear Store Manager,

We, members of (*your group*), are here today to ask Home Depot (*or Lowe's or Wal-Mart*) to stop selling all cypress mulch products in your store. Cypress swamps along the Gulf Coast are being clear-cut to provide this unsustainable and unnecessary product. Home Depot has a responsibility to consider the public good and to live up to its own standards of sustainability. Selling cypress mulch clearly violates these principles.

Cypress swamps provide some of the best natural storm protection for the Gulf coast and they are important habitat for wildlife, including threatened and endangered species. After the storms of 2005, the last thing we need to see is the loss of flooding defenses. The Save Our Cypress Coalition (www.saveourcypress.org) has gathered evidence of widespread clear-cutting in coastal Louisiana for mulch, and reports from other parts of the country have started to surface as well. Massive amounts of swamp are being logged and whole trees are being used just to make mulch, and that mulch ends up in your gardening department. This is unacceptable.

Fortunately, it's a problem that's easily solved by stocking sustainable mulch alternatives instead of cypress mulch. Pine straw, pine bark nuggets, melaleuca mulch, and eucalyptus mulch are similarly priced and equally effective (the University of Florida has proven their effectiveness, you can search for the studies at <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu>). You can also use recycled sugar cane, old pecan shells, or other reused items.

We formally request that you stop selling all cypress mulch products in favor of sustainable alternatives. I look forward to a response in writing.

Thank you,

Your name

This is just a sample, the letter will be more effective if you use your own words, just make sure to hit the key points. I guess there's really only one KEY point- Stop selling cypress mulch! Use this letter to give to the manager during a demonstration or to drop off anytime. Heck, if you can, drop one off every time you go shopping.

Sample Letter to CEO of Wal-Mart, Home Depot, or Lowe's

[Your Address]
[City, State]
[Date]

H. Lee Scott, CEO
Wal-Mart Stores, Inc.
702 S.W. 8th Street
Bentonville, AR 72716

Robert Nibloch, CEO
Lowe's Home Improvement, Inc.
1000 Lowe's Blvd.
 Mooresville, NC 28117

Frank Blake, CEO
The Home Depot, Inc.
2455 Ferry Paces Rd.N.W.
Atlanta, GA 30339

Dear [Mr. Scott, Mr. Nibloch, or Mr. Blake],

Please stop selling all cypress mulch products in your Wal-Mart (*or Lowe's or Home Depot*) stores. Valuable cypress swamps are being clear-cut to provide this unsustainable and unnecessary product.

Cypress swamps provide some of the best natural storm protection for the Gulf Coast and they are important habitat for wildlife, including threatened and endangered species. After the storms of 2005, the last thing we need to see is the loss of flood defenses. Massive amounts of swamp are being logged in Louisiana, and whole trees are being used just to make mulch. That mulch ends up in your gardening departments. This is unacceptable.

Fortunately, it's a problem that's easily solved by using sustainable mulch alternatives. I recommend that you begin stocking pine straw, pine bark nuggets, melaleuca mulch, and/or farmed eucalyptus mulch. Many of these products are similarly priced and equally effective.

Wal-Mart (*or Lowe's or Home Depot*) has an opportunity to be a leader on the environment and contribute to the sustainability of the Gulf Coast. I formally request that you stop selling all cypress mulch products in favor of sustainable alternatives. I look forward to a response in writing.

Thank you,

[Signature]
[Printed name]

Again, it's best if you use this letter as a base and put it into your own words. You can send it off directly to the addresses listed or send it to us and we'll deliver it in bulk with the others we've collected.

Postcard samples are on the following pages. They are ready to be printed and copied. They are designed as double-sided documents. You can also find a Word document version of the flier at www.saveourcypress.org, if you'd like to be able to get in there and alter it, i.e. put your logo or website, etc. Please feel free. If you want to borrow any of the design aspects and make your own fliers or posters, go for it.

Throughout the history of social movements, and especially this new breed of corporate campaigns, it has always been the grassroots efforts that create the power that leads to victory. Your work to save our cypress, when added to that of other activists and concerned citizens, will be the action that protects our forests and ensures a healthy Gulf.

Have fun!! Stay in touch.

Save Our Cypress Coalition
www.saveourcypress.org

Don't Clear-Cut Our Coasts

LOW'S

MAL★WART

Stop Selling
Cypress Mulch

THE
HOME
DESPOT

Don't Clear-Cut Our Coasts

LOW'S

MAL★WART

Stop Selling
Cypress Mulch

THE
HOME
DESPOT



SAVE OUR CYPRESS
COALITION
WWW.SAVEOURCYPRESS.ORG

Dear Wal-Mart, Home Depot, and Lowe's,

Please stop selling all cypress mulch products immediately.

Cypress swamps are vital natural storm protection and necessary habitat for wildlife, including threatened and endangered species. The cypress mulch industry has become an imminent threat to cypress forests, and you can play a critical role in protecting this valuable ecosystem.

It's time to live up to your corporate policies of sustainability.

Name _____

Address _____

City/State/ZIP _____

Email _____

Phone _____

Yes, I'd like to get more involved with the Save Our Cypress Campaign.



SAVE OUR CYPRESS
COALITION
WWW.SAVEOURCYPRESS.ORG

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