



TIPS FOR CONSERVATION BUS TOURS WITH WOMEN LANDOWNERS

Less is More - Discuss more at stops rather than lecturing and you will need fewer stops. Have someone knowledgeable about the area watch the route and time and if one or two stops have taken longer then head back to be on time for the return. If you are using a school bus this may be critical to end on time because of their school schedule.

Know the Route – Drive the route ahead of time thinking about all the tips in this handout. Remember, planning an alternate route can save the day. Most drivers want exact street addresses for stops to key into their mapping system.

Directing Drivers - Have someone directing the driver if possible who can also problem solve if conditions such as traffic or bad roads make a planned stop unsafe. There may be another vantage point for viewing the same conservation feature. The driver won't know to make a stop for a conservation buffer in between intersections and a navigator can help the driver plan a safe stop while you are delivering information and getting the women cued where to look.

Now You See It – Summer bus tours can be challenging if crops obscure the conservation practices, or they are missing, such as cover crops. Look for hill tops where the bus can pause or you can cue everyone to look down into a field as you pass. Use a booklet with good photos and descriptions of the practices and give people page numbers well in advance of being able to see out the windows. Conservation professionals of differing disciplines may describe many different aspects of a scene. Foresters see different things than agronomists, etc.

Off and On - You can expect it to take up to 15 minutes to unload 30 people and another 15 minutes to reload. It can take much longer if there are people with even minor mobility issues. Count and recount – no woman left behind!

On Your Right - It takes a long time for people to spot what you are featuring if they are not already familiar with it. The women will be visiting with others and buses are noisy so they are likely to miss your first words. Help everyone know where to look, including far and near and whether to look ahead of where they are sitting or straight out from the bus. Ask the women if they notice anything to point out and reinforce the fact they have conservation expertise.

I Can't Hear You – Check to see if your bus has a portable speaker box. If not bring one along. The roar of the bus engine and road noise can quickly diminish the effectiveness of your tour if participants cannot hear.

Out the Window – Roads can be muddy in the spring or fall roads and bus windows can quickly become covered. You can make do by opening windows at a stop, but that can also be a real problem. Drivers don't typically have anything with them to wash windows part way through and mud can scratch windows, so bringing your own paper towels to wipe the windows without much water is not a good solution. Just be aware when you are planning a spring tour, especially when frost is going out.

Never - Don't ask the bus driver to turn the bus anywhere they are not comfortable doing so.

Look Up - If you plan to have the driver leave the main paved roads or pull into a park, scout the area ahead of time for branches that could scratch the top of a bus or taller motor coach.

Be Quiet! - Don't talk all the time as you drive. The women need the "down time."

Mind Your Step – Be sure the bus is equipped with a step stool for those than cannot step high and that the driver or someone in your group is designated to offer a steadying hand up or down the stairs.

Water - Bringing water is always a good idea, even if the day isn't hot. Bring a garbage bag for the empties.