



The Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) saves wildlife and wild places worldwide. They do so through science, global conservation, education and the management of the world's largest system of urban wildlife parks, led by the flagship Bronx Zoo. Together these activities change attitudes towards nature and help people imagine wildlife and humans living in harmony. WCS is committed to this mission because it is essential to the integrity of life on Earth.

## THE CHALLENGE

Created in 1993, the Environmental Protection Fund (EPF) is the state's dedicated source of funding for critical programs, including those run by WCS. In recent budget cycles, the EPF's appropriations were reduced by 47 percent.

For State Fiscal Year 2010-2011, the New York Governor proposed drastic budget cuts to the EPF—specifically to the Zoos, Botanical Gardens and Aquaria program. As a result of this proposal, living institutions across the state, including WCS's Bronx Zoo and New York Aquarium, faced a nearly 50 percent cut in funding. Around that same time, the City of New York proposed a 42 percent budget cut for the Bronx Zoo, New York Aquarium and all the New York City cultural institutions for Fiscal Year 2011.

In response to the New York state and the New York City budget campaigns—which were two separate, but overlapping, campaigns with similar strategies, goals and messaging—WCS had to mobilize its constituents and rally them to oppose the proposed cuts. To strengthen their case for continued funding, WCS needed to get the mayor and the governor, as well as state and elected officials to understand the value that cultural organizations provide to both the city and state.

## MOBILIZING CONSTITUENTS

Using Convio, WCS developed two online advocacy campaigns—one for the city, one for the state—that highlighted the economic impact of the Bronx Zoo and the New York Aquarium. The organization emphasized the fact that these two cultural institutions pump millions of dollars into the economy each year through local merchants, provide thousands of jobs for the surrounding communities, and serve as a vital source of science education for millions of students. The overarching campaign messaging drew attention to how the proposed budget cuts would impact the zoo and aquarium services, exhibits, and programs.

First, a multi-email campaign sent messages to approximately 200,000 constituents residing in New York state. The first message was an advocacy alert, and was followed by either a reminder if the constituent had not taken action, or a tell-a-friend message if the constituent had taken action. Once the governor's budget was rejected, WCS used this unique window of opportunity to send another reminder to the group.

At the city level, WCS sent five messages to constituents in New York City: an alert, a reminder, a tell-a-friend request, a video reminder, and a call alert for those who had taken action.

## QUICK SUMMARY

- Streamlined the efficiency and effectiveness of WCS's online advocacy efforts by using Convio to support both city and state campaigns in parallel
- Sent more than 150,000 messages to elected officials, recruited almost 2,500 new constituents online, and integrated social media into WCS's advocacy campaigns
- Mobilized thousands of constituents who, in conjunction with lobbying efforts, helped to secure the attention and support of elected officials
- Restored the funding to the Environmental Protection Fund/Zoos, Botanical Gardens and Aquaria Program in state budget and city budget for cultural institutions

WCS also integrated social media into its campaign efforts, generating more than 11,000 video views on YouTube, and reaching 1,400 people through its growing community of supporters on Twitter and Facebook.

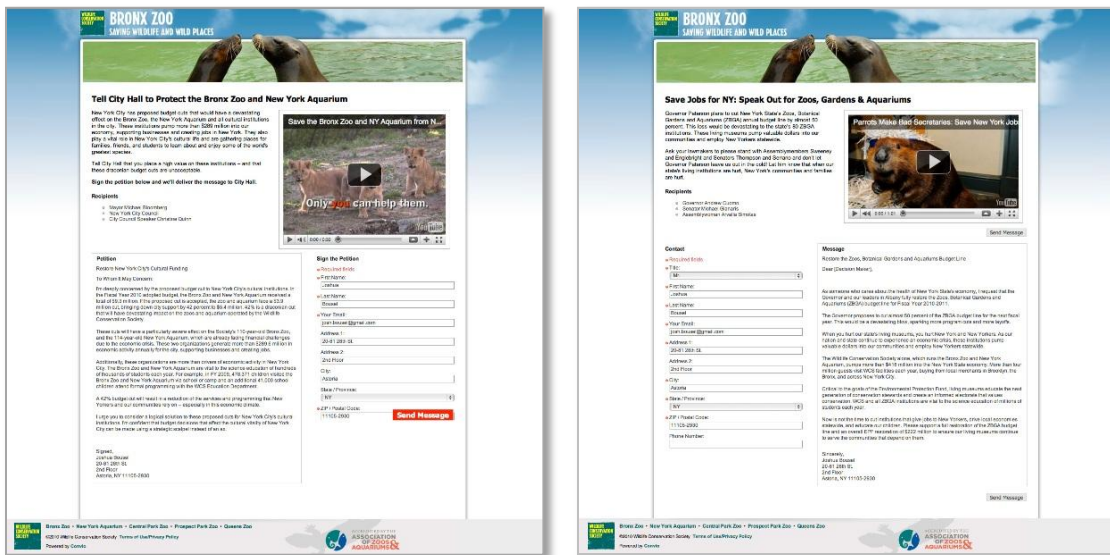
“The Convio platform made it easier for us to track who was getting emails, who was not taking action, and then respond accordingly to mobilize as many people as possible to lobby against the budget cuts,” explained Janet Torres, Director of Government and Community Affairs at WCS. “It enabled us to continually refine our online campaign messaging with real-time results. Done in conjunction with our in-park presence gathering petitions and lobbying one-on-one with members, the campaigns were very effective at getting people involved.”

“Through Convio, we were able to better segment our audience, target our messages and track our results in real-time. That made our jobs easier.”

— Debbie Schneiderman, Assistant Director, Online Marketing Programs, WCS

## THE OUTCOME

Combined, the two campaigns sent almost 30,000 email messages directly to the governor of New York and the state legislators, and almost 75,000 email messages to the mayor of New York City and the city council. An additional 32,000 messages were delivered to these targets through text messages and the collection of in-park petitions, resulting in more than 130,000 messages in total. The campaign efforts helped WCS to recruit almost 2,500 new constituents online, in addition to more than 28,000 through in-park and mobile devices.



“The system we used prior to Convio was unable to handle this many messages,” stated Janet. “We attempted it once or twice with a volume of less than 7,000 email messages, but we had to involve three or four different people to get the job done. It was a mess that led me to spend more time writing and sending my messages out than doing my lobbying. With Convio, we were able to send out more than 10 times that number in a fraction of the time.”

In response to the latest advocacy campaign for Fiscal Year 2012 to restore city funding, WCS received correspondence directly from a City Council Member’s Legislative Aide. The high response to the cause prompted one council member to reach out to her constituents to express her views on this matter. This was exactly the type of engagement WCS was trying to elicit as they attempted to open a dialogue between supporters and elected officials at the city level. Constituents become the third party validators to what we at WCS are saying during

individual meetings with elected officials,” explained Janet. “We can have the best lobbying one-pagers that describe our case, and we can go and talk to these people face to face, but it’s really having those thousands of constituents voicing their opinions that makes the council members listen.”

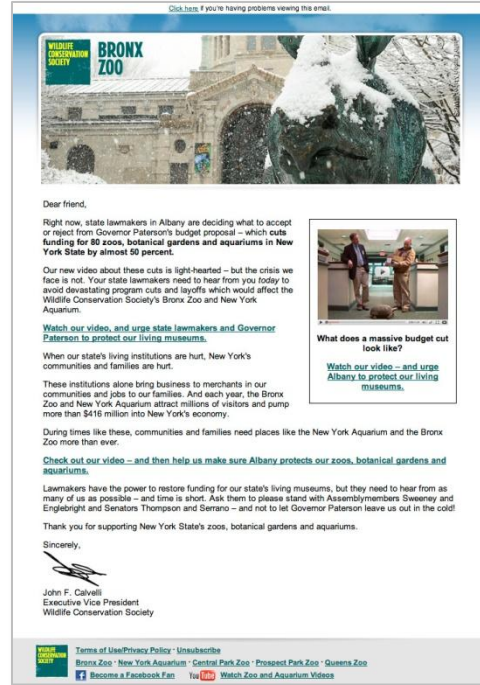
Thanks to the tireless efforts of WCS and its constituents, \$3,378,451 of the city budget and \$4,500,000 of the state budget was restored. After this successful outcome for both the city and state campaigns, WCS sent a thank you email to all action takers, and reported the favorable results of their hard work.

Moving forward, WCS plans to strengthen the integration between its offline and online campaigns by using iPads for in-park petition gathering. This new approach will eliminate the need to manually enter constituent data and minimize errors made from transcribing handwritten notes, thus improving the quality of email addresses. The data will flow directly into Convio in real-time from the in-park collection at three facilities. Once a constituent enters their information into the system, they will begin to automatically receive messages from WCS and have opportunities to tell-a-friend about the organization.

“We’re also excited about being able to do geo-targeting on a city level for the FY 2012 city budget campaign,” said Janet. “We can further refine our messaging as we prepare campaigns that target council members based on a constituents’ district and zip codes.”

### ABOUT CONVIO

Convio is the leading provider of on-demand constituent relationship management (CRM) software and services that give nonprofit organizations a better way to inspire and mobilize people to support their organization. Convio Online Marketing, the company’s online marketing suite, offers integrated software for fundraising, advocacy, events, email marketing and web content management, and its Convio Common Ground™ CRM system helps organizations efficiently track and manage all interactions with supporters. All Convio products are delivered through the Software-as-a-Service (SaaS) model and are backed by a portfolio of best-in-class consulting and support services and a network of partners who provide value added services and applications focused on the unique needs of nonprofit organizations. For more information, please visit [www.convio.com](http://www.convio.com).



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