

USING COMMUNICATION SCIENCE TO EFFECTIVELY ENGAGE COASTAL POPULATIONS

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Natural scientists, managers, informal educators, and other coastal professionals communicate with the public. However, many are not trained or invested in the sciences of communication, learning, or behavior change. Greater familiarity with these fields can lead to improved communication and better public engagement. An approach to providing an overview is through questioning five common assumptions that coastal professionals may make about communicating with the public:

1. We need to get the word out.
2. We already know how to communicate with this audience.
3. If they only had information X, their behavior would change.
4. Recipients of our information will consider it thoughtfully and learn what we'd like them to learn.
5. Successful communication is an art.

In discussing these assumptions a variety of insights from contemporary social science research will be presented along with several useful models of communication developed by researchers.

How these insights and models have been used in a current research and engagement project (working with coastal communities to assist them in preparing for climate change) will show their practical application and usefulness.

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