Reframing the Climate Change Conversation

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Coastal Vulnerability to Sea Level Rise
Salt Marshes of the Atlantic and Gulf Coasts
• 233,060 acres in Maryland
• 169,681 acres on Lower Eastern Shore = 71%
Zonation

High tide

Low tide

The sub-tidal zone is important for fish at low tide.

Mudflats are rich in invertebrates. Shorebirds feed here.

The low marsh supports cordgrass and is good habitat for herons, egrets, and clapper rails.

The high marsh supports pickleweed and is good habitat for Belding’s savannah sparrows.
Smooth Cordgrass

Black Needle Rush

Rose Mallow

Salt Meadow Hay

Glasswort
Marsh Loss

1938

1974

1989
If we train enough voices in proven communication techniques we think we can change the national discourse around climate change to be productive, creative and solutions focused.
NNOCCI is a partnership between informal science educators, climate scientists, cognitive & social scientists and evaluators whose mission is to change the world through better communication techniques around climate change.
Where do we start?

Knowing how people think, helps us construct and deliver our messages for highest impact.
What trends do you notice in these pictures?
Strategic Framing is…

A research based approach that is proven to:

- Bridge the gap between scientist understanding and public understanding
- Help the public understand the mechanisms of climate change
- Show the public how they can be ‘heroes’ of the climate change story
- Leave the visitor and the interpreter with a sense of hope
Four Elements of Strategic Framing:

- **TONE** establishes the issue as explanatory and reasonable and for ‘everyone,’ not just those who already agree with the point of view being expressed.

- **VALUES** remind people of what’s at stake or what they already care about that the issue connects to.

- **EXPLANATORY CHAINS AND METAPHORS** enhance peoples’ understanding of processes and mechanisms in ways that help them to think through productive solutions.

- **SOLUTIONS** present people with ways they can join others to bring forward systemic change that addresses the root cause of the problem.
Values orient a communication

- Values help establish why an issue matters; what is at stake.
- Framers understand Values as a broad category of cherished cultural ideals.
- Because Values orient understanding of an issue, it’s important to choose Values that lead to the type of thinking that’s needed.
Why should we care?

1. Unique habitat for specialized wildlife
2. Nursery for fisheries
3. Supports migratory waterfowl and fur-bearers
4. Shoreline buffer against storm surges
5. Traps sediment, nutrients, and pollutants
6. Recreation and Tourism

- Fiddler Crab
- Marsh Periwinkle
- Salt Marsh Skipper
- Flounder
- Bluefish
- Menhaden
- Croaker
- Canadian Goose
- American Black Duck
- Muskrat
Protection

“X” matters because we have a duty to safeguard the wellbeing of people and places

- We must protect and preserve the habitats and ecosystems we depend on
- Showing concern for others is the right thing to do
- Stepping in to ensure peoples’ safety and well being
- Let’s take measures to eliminate or reduce risks
- Let’s be vigilant in shielding people and places from harm
Responsible Management

“X” matters because taking common-sense steps today is in the interests of future generations

- Let’s be responsible when it comes to the environment
- Let’s look ahead to handle problems before they get worse
- Responsible managers keep an open mind, look to evidence, and take a level-headed, step-by-step approach
- Future generations depend on the decisions we make today
Explanatory Metaphors

- Make an abstract idea concrete and sticky
- Help people understand the mechanisms at work
- When linked to causes and impacts they motivate productive consideration of multiple solutions
Heat Trapping Blanket

- The atmosphere is like a blanket that surrounds the earth.
- When we burn fossil fuels, we add CO2, which thickens the blanket.
- The thicker the blanket gets, the more heat it traps.
- The blanket effect leads to warming, which disrupts the climate.

When we burn fossil fuels for energy, we add more and more carbon dioxide into the atmosphere. This buildup acts like a thickening blanket that traps heat around the world, which disrupts the climate.
Solutions as a Frame Element

- Framing with Solutions involves describing evidence-based policies, programs, or initiatives that address the problem that is the topic of the communication.

- Foster issue engagement and hope by framing climate change as a problem that can be addressed at a collective level through practical steps by an informed, engaged citizenry.
An Emerging Core Story of Climate Change

- Why does this matter to society?
  - Protection
  - Responsible Management

- How does it work?
  - Heat Trapping Blanket

- How do we improve the situation?
  - Solutions
www.climateinterpreter.org