

COASTAL COMMUNICATORS

A newsletter for the nation's coastal management and research reserve programs.

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South Slough National
Estuarine Research Reserve

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– Ernest Hemingway

November 2018, Issue 3



COMMUNICATION INSIGHTS

WRITE STORIES THAT GET NOTICED

Here at NOAA, we developed an “impact story database” filled with short stories that illustrate how our programs are making a difference. We use these stories to answer information requests from Congress and the media, and as fodder for handouts, speeches, and outreach campaigns. The story database, 200-plus strong, can be found here: coast.noaa.gov/states/stories.

The writing techniques we employ can be useful for your story writing efforts; hence, the tips found in this article.

FRONT LOAD THE GOOD STUFF

Imagine you are explaining a great project outcome to a busy congressional aide who has exactly 30 seconds to spare. What do you do? Start with the impressive results, the positive impact!

Our readers are just like that congressional aide, fidgeting impatiently, so lead with the big benefits, like this story intro:

“When Hurricane Irma hit Tybee Island, Georgia, the community was better able to weather the storm both physically and financially, thanks to a sea level rise adaptation plan that saves \$3 million on insurance through the Federal Emergency Management Agency’s Community Rating System.”

Then follow up with a quick nod your program’s contribution. Later paragraphs can go into detail.

NO GENERALITIES, PLEASE

“This initiative benefits many coastal communities.” Unfortunately, a sentence like that inspires a collective “meh” from your target audience. Their minds have no details to grab onto, their imaginations have no room to play.

In every sentence you can, replace the general claim with the specific setting and problem, the verifiable fact, the concrete detail and benefit. It can be done briefly and will leave a lasting impression. “This initiative benefits six working-waterfront communities in Maine’s South Coast region”—now that’s the idea.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

Describe the good things happening now—or even just starting to happen—as a result of the project, service, product, or grant. For example, if a local official attended your natural infrastructure workshop and is now planning two raingardens for the downtown district, that’s a positive impact, even if the shovels haven’t broken ground yet.

Don’t overlook the projects launched a few months—or even years—ago. Maybe new results have trickled in since you last talked to your contact in the field. Post-project feedback, like this example, can make for a powerful endorsement:

“Following Hurricane Harvey, Padre Island residents reported that homes and businesses located close to the newly restored dune structure experienced little to no flooding, while areas farther away were more prone to flooding.”

GROUND YOUR STORIES IN FACTS

Scan those internal and external reports for a fact, number, or statistic that highlights the project’s importance. If local reporters covered your project, look back at those news articles for facts you can use. A few rules:

- Stick to well-regarded institutions and agencies for fact sources
- Make it easy to understand
- Use only facts that are four years old or less
- Always include a link to the fact source

Better yet, check out some NOAA fact sources that save time by being just a couple of clicks away. The “Fast Facts” featured by NOAA’s Office for Coastal Management are easy to insert into stories on high-tide flooding, hazard mitigation value, hurricane facts, and other coastal topics. Find these facts by scrolling to the bottom of coast.noaa.gov.

DOLLARS TALK

Stories featuring a project’s economic benefits, cost savings, or return on investment get loads of attention. NOAA’s Economics: National Ocean Watch (ENOW) Explorer—at coast.noaa.gov/enowexplorer—can give your story that extra “oomph” by tying project benefits to the state’s or county’s ocean economy. For instance, a story on Certified Clean Marinas got extra attention with two ENOW facts added:

The marina and boatyard industry plays a significant role in Wisconsin’s coastal recreation and tourism economy, which in 2015 contributed more than \$1 billion to the state’s gross domestic product and paid out \$523 million in wages.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Before sending in that story, add these details:

- List major partners
- Include a contact email address
- List a web address for more information, if there is one

If you represent a program tied to NOAA’s Office for Coastal Management and have a story in mind for our database, please reach out to your NOAA liaison and get that conversation started. We’d love to hear from you!

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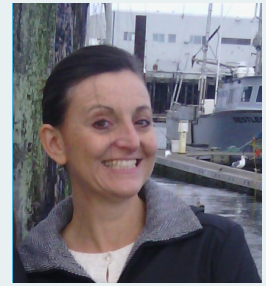


COMMUNICATOR OF THE MONTH

Name: Deborah Rudd

Title: Public Involvement Coordinator

Organization: South Slough National Estuarine Research Reserve, Charleston, Oregon



Organizational Structure

While we all have clearly defined roles, we are a small staff and often work together on projects. Our managers tend to work closely with state staff, as they travel there on a monthly basis. Individual staff members work with other Salem-based state staff related to their particular job roles. For example, I communicate with the Salem-based communications staff.

Outreach Approach

I am the sole person for our reserve specifically assigned to outreach. However, our administrative and Coastal Training Program staff occasionally assist with specific efforts.

Job Duties

I serve as both the volunteer and intern coordinator and the marketing and outreach person. I'd say about 60 percent of my time is spent on coordination, and the other 40 percent on outreach. I correspond with local groups and provide volunteers or staff to work, represent us, and speak at events. I work with our state partner, who provides the software enabling us to send out our bi-monthly calendar and newsletter to about 850 subscribers. I send regular public service announcements and distribute fliers locally highlighting our events. I use social media—primarily Facebook and Instagram—to promote programs and activities and communicate information about the reserve, or estuaries in general. I have a good working relationship with the Visitors Bureau and local chamber, so when travel writers or other media opportunities come available, they often invite us to participate. We are currently working on expanding our video library, so we will be engaging people more with You Tube and other video platforms.

Social Media

Social media can be difficult to stay on top of. Primarily, I handle the social media, but one of our managers will sometimes assist. Facebook has been the number one way most of our participants have learned about our programs at the reserve. Our friends group spent a few dollars "boosting" posts a few times, and that has helped somewhat.

Most Fun, Most Challenging

The best part of my job is having the opportunity to work with all segments of our staff, and with a variety of people in our community. Promoting a place as beautiful as the South Slough Reserve is fantastic! The challenging part is working with media on timing of promotions, and on accuracy. Also, we have no money for paid advertising, which can be a hindrance sometimes.

Work Mantra

Partnerships! Several events that have previously had lackluster attendance greatly improved by partnering with another organization or two.

Wish for the Future

I'd like to regularly host a high school or college intern to help us with social media; to better understand timing for press and events; and to have at least a small advertising budget!

FROM US TO YOU

ACCESS FOR ALL

Kudos to state coastal programs and those in the research reserve system who are working to boost accessibility and inclusion, breaking down barriers to coastal access. Read about some of the specific advances being made in this National Ocean Service web story: oceanservice.noaa.gov/recreation/coastal-access.html.

UPCOMING SOCIAL MEDIA CAMPAIGNS

Follow us on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#), and tag along with these campaigns.

- November 1 to 30 – use #GiveThanks to share how our coasts inspire gratitude.
- November 11 to 17 – use #GeographyAwareness to explore data and tools for your mapping needs.

OUTREACH TOOL SPOTLIGHT – COASTAL COUNTY SNAPSHOTS

This tool auto-generates easy-to-understand handouts about your county's flood risks, wetland benefits, and coastal economy. Use the Digital Coast's Coastal County Snapshots to turn complex subjects—and the data that support them—into educational charts and graphs that speak to the layperson. The magic happens here: coast.noaa.gov/digitalcoast/tools/snapshots.html.

MORE VIDEOS, LESS SEARCHING

We have lots of videos available for your outreach needs, and they're all on our website. Now they're also on YouTube, where you can quickly find them by searching for "National Ocean Service." The latest video, created for the coastal zone management programs, can be found here: youtube.com/watch?v=pIoQr-h1foc.

FAST FACTS: CORAL REEFS

This is one of the many graphics and fast facts available for your use in presentations and handouts. Grab this one at coast.noaa.gov/states/fast-facts/coral-reefs. If you have an idea for a new group of fast facts or illustrations, please let us know.



\$3.4 billion value every year, benefiting fisheries, tourism, and coastal communities

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