

# COASTAL COMMUNICATORS

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

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IF YOU JUST COMMUNICATE,  
YOU CAN GET BY. BUT IF YOU  
COMMUNICATE SKILLFULLY,  
YOU CAN WORK MIRACLES.

– Jim Rohn

November 2021, Issue 37



## COMMUNICATION INSIGHTS

### ACCENTUATING THE POSITIVE FOR A WINNING CAMPAIGN

Conducting a successful outreach campaign in the U.S. coastal zone can be quite a heavy lift. One reason is that campaigns aim to inspire positive change, yet it's counterproductive and impossible to avoid all "no" messages. Don't litter on beaches. Don't use polluting solvents in marinas. Don't walk on coral reefs. The key, of course, is striking a dynamic balance.

[Daniel Kahneman](#) and other psychologists have found that people are much more receptive to information framed positively than negatively, even if the underlying information is the same. Three campaigns did just that, sprinkling upbeat incentives and messages throughout their successful efforts to lessen environmental and public health hazards.

Their stories might spark inspired ideas for your next outreach campaign.

#### Making It Fun

It is a fact that balloon litter is one of the five deadliest kinds of debris for marine wildlife. How did partners in Virginia take a depressing statistic like that and create a popular and appealing campaign? They launched a [festive website](#), and social media postings, filled with vivid graphics and tips on hosting balloon-free celebrations. Other features explain why balloons and beaches do not mix.

This campaign helped lead to a revised state law, which now enacts civil penalties for "the intentional releasing, discarding, or causing to be released, any balloon outdoors." What's more, businesses and nonprofits in Mexico, South Africa, and Korea have shared the website as part of their own anti-littering efforts. The Virginia Coastal Zone Management Program joined many partners to make this campaign a success.

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### Showing Volunteers the Love

In 2018, the Mission-Aransas National Estuarine Research Reserve in Texas established the volunteer Nurdle Patrol to help clear coastal areas of these plastic pellets, which endanger marine animals.

The citizen scientists documented evidence that helped parties reach a [\\$50 million settlement](#)—one that compels the company responsible to clean specific polluted areas and stop releasing local plastic waste. Elsewhere, the nurdle problem grows, and volunteers grow along with it. To date, nurdle patrollers have performed more than 10,000 surveys in 14 nations.

How did this campaign attract such enthusiasm so quickly? For one thing, the “ask” of citizen scientists is straightforward and takes little time to accomplish. A training video online is less than five minutes long. A nurdle survey effort lasts 10 minutes, after which the volunteer simply fills out a brief, online form and presses “submit.”

In addition, positive volunteer feedback and camaraderie are easy to find. For example, an online [map](#) shows the impressive range of U.S. Nurdle Patrol sites, and snapshots submitted by volunteers are often shared on the Facebook page.

### Replacing “Ew” with “I’ll Do It!”

You might imagine it’s tough to sell a campaign that aims to reduce septic system backups and overflows. People can be squeamish. However, the Indiana Lake Michigan Coastal Program and its partners proved the opposite was true, with friendly, upbeat messaging that [prompted positive changes](#) from wastewater haulers and thousands of septic system owners. These successes have been presented at state floodplain, stormwater, and environmental health conferences, too.

Whimsical slogans, such as, “Don’t Overload the Commode” and “Don’t Strain Your Drain” used humor to bring home the message. The state coastal program trained 20 “septic system ambassadors” to reach out to their neighbors on proper system maintenance. The ambassadors also managed community events as part of nationwide SepticSmart Week efforts led by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

### More on Campaigns

Are you looking for additional guidance on outreach campaigns? Read this [Coastal Communicators article](#) for helpful tips. Good luck!

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# COMMUNICATION PRODUCT OF THE MONTH

**Featured product:** Series of infographics focused on sea level rise and flooding

**Source:** [New Jersey Coastal Management Program](#). For details or to see more examples from this campaign, contact [Devon.Blair@dep.nj.gov](mailto:Devon.Blair@dep.nj.gov)

**Submitted by:** Donna McCaskill, Communication Manager for NOAA's Office for Coastal Management

**Background:** New Jersey has several ongoing campaigns designed to help people better understand (and appreciate!) their coast. There's [MyCoast: New Jersey](#), where people help document the changing coast by submitting photos, and [Know Your Tides](#), where tidal and flooding information is provided.

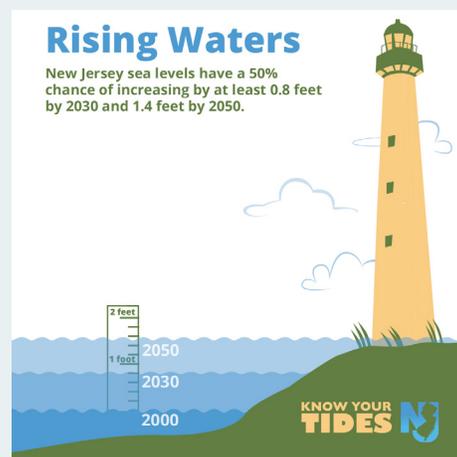
These efforts were partially funded by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, and led by the [New Jersey Coastal Management Program's Department of Environmental Protection](#), in partnership with the [Jacques Cousteau National Estuarine Research Reserve](#).

The focus of this profile is a series of infographics used in conjunction with these campaigns to bring home messaging about sunny day flooding and sea level rise.

**Why I like it:** Flooding information is so very important to deliver to a coastal community. But it is a complicated story, one that can be filled with caveats, uncertainty, and terms that are unfamiliar to the target audience. It's also often not a very hopeful story.

New Jersey has taken this story bull by the horns, and boiled it down to specific, easy-to-understand information. The data is there, and is unflinching, yet the plain-speak approach delivers the message. The colors and the almost "cartoon" approach to the graphic design make the information look inviting without stepping into "this is too cute to be concerned about" territory.

In the world of communications, if a tree falls in a forest and no one hears it, it didn't happen. These projects, and these [infographics](#) in particular, make sure the flooding story is heard.



(Please note: this is not an endorsement of the designer, website, or any proprietary tools, but simply this writer's opinion on a good communication product.)

## FROM US TO YOU

### OUTREACH TOOL SPOTLIGHT – STATE FAST FACTS

From coral reefs to climate change—there's a fast fact for that. But what you might not know is that there's also a fast fact page for every coastal state and territory, featuring economic, demographic, and climate statistics specific to that state. And just like the other fast fact pages, the state pages also include a presentation-ready graphic with succinct statistics. So the next time you have to create a presentation or product, a speech or a social media post, remember that one of the state pages might have exactly what you need. Find them here: [coast.noaa.gov/states](http://coast.noaa.gov/states).

### UPCOMING SOCIAL MEDIA CAMPAIGNS

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

- November 1 to 5: Use [#OysterWeek](#) to share the importance of these magnificent mollusks.
- November 15 to 19: Use [#GeographyAwareness](#) to get your audience excited about geography.

- November 29 to December 3: Use [#CoralsWeek](#) to celebrate one of the planet's most important ecosystems.
- All month: Use [#GiveThanks](#) to share your gratitude for all things coastal.

### IMPACT STORY: PROGRAMS IMPROVE PUBLIC ACCESS FOR ALL

Increasing and enhancing recreational access for all members of a community is one of the cornerstones of our work. Over the past decade, the National Coastal Zone Management Program has created nearly 1,000 new public access sites, enhanced over 2,800 sites, and protected and restored thousands of acres. This impact story highlights some of the specific ways programs around the country have made the coast more inclusive and accessible. Learn more about what your colleagues are doing, and feel free to share it with your audience. Read it here: [coast.noaa.gov/states/stories/access-inclusiveness.html](http://coast.noaa.gov/states/stories/access-inclusiveness.html).

## FAST FACTS – LAND COVER CHANGE



### Land Cover Change



**America's coastal lands:  
25 percent of the contiguous U.S., being developed  
twice as much as the rest of the country.**

**Amount:** 49.8 million acres changed from 1996 to 2016

This is one of the many graphics and facts available for your use in presentations and handouts. Grab this one at [coast.noaa.gov/states/fast-facts/land-cover-change.html](http://coast.noaa.gov/states/fast-facts/land-cover-change.html). If you have an idea for a new group of fast facts or illustrations, please let us know.

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