

COASTAL COMMUNICATORS

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

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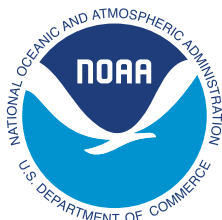
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EDITING IS SIMPLY THE
APPLICATION OF THE COMMON
SENSE OF ANY GOOD READER. THAT'S
WHY, TO BE AN EDITOR, YOU HAVE
TO BE A READER. IT'S THE NUMBER
ONE QUALIFICATION.

– Robert Gottlieb

September 2023, Issue 57



COMMUNICATION INSIGHTS

EDITING YOUR OWN WRITING

In my role as a writer and editor in the Office for Coastal Management's communications department, a large part of my job is editing other people's work—articles, presentations, letters, web content, and more. Yet when I write anything for this newsletter, someone else does the editing (our copy editor extraordinaire, Jerry Esch). That's because editing your own writing is really, really difficult.

That said, not everyone has the luxury of a copy editor. In small communications teams, the writing, editing, social media posting, outreach coordinating—heck, sometimes even the floor sweeping—is done by only one or two people. Sound familiar?

Therefore, it's important to know how to edit your own stuff. Yes, two paragraphs ago I said it is difficult. But not impossible.

Create the Structure

Making your job as self-editor as easy as possible begins as soon as you start writing—slightly before that, actually. The result of unstructured, unplanned writing is often rambling, long-winded text. If you create an outline and determine the structure of what you're writing, you're much more likely to stick to the important points, not lose your train of thought, and keep word count in mind.

For this article, before I really got going, I had written down (and thought out) the heading titles ("Create the Structure," "Write Now, Edit Later," etc.). It kept me on track, and as I got to the next section, I knew what I wanted to focus on, helping to keep the writing economical. (And if you read [last month's issue](#) of this newsletter, you'll remember the importance of brevity.)

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Write Now, Edit Later

Once it's time to write, just write. Write thoughtfully, of course, with intent and purpose, sticking to the theme and the organization. But don't edit as you write. That's an easy way to lose track of ideas and overthink things, which halts the flow of the creative process. There's a structure to *what* you are writing, and to *how* you are writing.

Perform Surgery

One of the most memorable sayings about writing, for me, is "kill your darlings." Often attributed to William Faulkner, but stated in similar variations by many famous writers, it means to get rid of sentences, phrases, and anything else in your work that isn't necessary to the story, no matter how much you personally love it. Boy is it difficult. But those aforementioned writers said it, and did it, because it's such an important part of the process. Just because you like the way something sounds doesn't mean it works for what you're writing.

Apologies for the mixed metaphors, but I also think of editing as performing surgery. There's minor surgery—cutting a few things here and there—and major surgery, which eliminates a significant number of words to end up with a much tighter piece of writing. Performing surgery on your writing is difficult, but possible, and necessary if you double as your own editor.



Read It, Share It

Once you've written your piece, and removed all the superfluous content, read it aloud. First of all, when you read it aloud you can catch a mistake you might have previously missed. (It's so easy to miss glaring mistakes when it's your own work, because you're so close to it.) Second of all, good writing has good flow. It's smooth and it sounds good. If you stumble or trip over any words while reading it out to yourself—or are confused by something—the reader will have the same experience.

Next, consider sharing it. If you don't have a fellow communicator to share it with, share it with any co-worker, or even a friend. Even if they don't understand the material, they'll still be able to tell you if the tone, voice, flow, and other elements work.

Finalize and Publish

You've written it, cut it, shared it, cut it some more, and then a little more. Now step away from the keyboard and send it out the door. If you're seeking perfection, you're not going to find it. So at some point, when you feel you've done your very best but before you've become obsessed with making it just a little bit better, you have to just consider it done. After all, 1) there's no such thing as perfection; and 2) you've got lots of other things to do, like more writing, editing, social media posting, outreach coordinating—and maybe even floor sweeping

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COMMUNICATION PRODUCT OF THE MONTH

Featured products: Taco Watch, Taco Warning Meme

Source: [facebook.com/NormalFire](https://www.facebook.com/NormalFire)

Submitted by: Pamela Jacobs, Lynker on Contract with NOAA's Office for Coastal Management

What it is: On May 3, 2021, the Normal Fire Department, of Normal, Illinois, posted a meme on Facebook using tacos as an analogy for the difference between severe weather *watches* and *warnings*. According to [this article](#), it was created by the fire department's communications director, and quickly went viral. It made its way to TikTok, garnering over 150,000 views, and in addition to the original post being shared by organizations and people

around the country, variations of it, using pancakes, margaritas, pizza, and more, have been (and continue to be) created for similar purposes. And anyone in communications can tell you, imitation is indeed the sincerest form of flattery.

Why I like it: Beach or mountains, cats or dogs, savory or sweets . . . in a world where so many opinions differ, one thing almost everyone can agree upon is the love of tacos. So choosing the universally beloved food as not just a vehicle for various toppings, but also for a lesson on severe weather, is pretty brilliant. And with over 7,000 shares, and countless comments about how clever—and actually informative—the post was, it's clear that people love the Normal Fire Department's meme as much as they love, well, tacos.



FROM US TO YOU

OUTREACH TOOL SPOTLIGHT – NEIGHBORHOODS AT RISK TOOL

Communicating the current and future effects that climate change will have on a community can be as difficult as it is important. This web-based tool helps visualize climate and socioeconomic risks at the neighborhood scale, offers projections based on emissions scenarios, and allows users to download their findings. It's an easy way to share the important facts with your audience. Find it here: coast.noaa.gov/digitalcoast/tools/neighborhoods-risk.html.

UPCOMING SOCIAL MEDIA CAMPAIGNS

Follow us on Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram, and tag along with these themes:

- September 4 to 8: Massachusetts
- September 11 to 15: Marine Debris
- September 15 to October 15: Hispanic Heritage Month

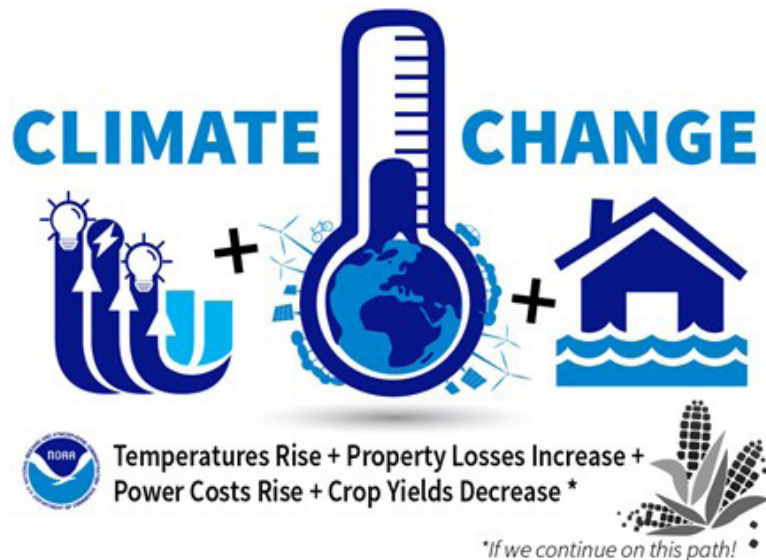
- September 16 to 23: National Estuaries Week
- September 25 to 29: New Hampshire

BIPARTISAN INFRASTRUCTURE LAW AND INFLATION REDUCTION ACT IMPACT STORIES

Coastal management and research reserve projects selected for this funding range in size and scope, represent all regions of the country, and will often include the acquisition and conservation of ecologically and culturally significant ancestral lands. There are now descriptions of all of these projects in our impact story database, and they can be filtered by location, program, topic (including newly added ones), and more. Additionally, we will continue to update these stories as the important work continues. Find Bipartisan Infrastructure Law stories here: coast.noaa.gov/states/stories/?prog-filter=Bipartisan%20Infrastructure%20Law.

FAST FACTS – CLIMATE CHANGE

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/climate-change.html. If you have an idea for a new group of fast facts or illustrations, please let us know.



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View past issues at coast.noaa.gov/gallery/newsletter.html.

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