

MINDING THE GAP: ANALYSIS OF ARGUMENTS MADE IN THE MEDIA FOR AND AGAINST
CLOSING THE BREACH ON FIRE ISLAND NATIONAL SEASHORE

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Adaptive management in coastal systems is in large part achieved through knowledge sharing between the public, research, and management communities. This exchange relies upon bidirectional communication and information exchange. We seek to better understand communication about barrier island breaches to inform their adaptive management. In our case study we analyze media content about the breach in Otis Pike High Dune Wilderness Area at Fire Island Nation Seashore that occurred during Hurricane Sandy. Using media discourse analysis, we identify the arguments mobilized for and against the breach closure in these documents. We further identify and group these arguments by frames including those based on ecosystems services and disservices. We posit that the opposition to leaving the breach open is not solely based on a lack of knowledge by the public—deficit model—but in some cases is based on competing values and, in turn, different framing of the arguments. We hope that understanding the framing of these arguments can improve communication around the management of breaches both in the National Seashore and on other barrier island systems by preparing managers for the kinds of arguments people will make for and against breach closures and informing more nuanced, bidirectional forms of communication.