Getting the Message Out

National Monitoring Conference

April 27, 2010

U. S. Geological Survey
What is messaging?

1. Understand your audience.

2. Develop your message.

3. Practice and deliver your message.
What is messaging?

1. Understand your audience.

2. Develop your message.

3. Practice and deliver your message.
Benefits of Effective Messaging

• Make science available to the public

• Demonstrate value for tax dollars

• Earn support to continue
Honing your message

• Make it short
• Make it clear
• Make it relevant
What is messaging?

1. Understand your audience.

2. Develop your message.

3. Practice and deliver your message.
Understand Your Audience

• Who are they?

• What do they care most about?

• What is their level of understanding?
Understand Your Audience

When scientists say...

- “Enhance”
- “Values”
- “Regime”
- “Bias”
- “Ecology”
- “Organic”
- “Theory”

People understand...

- Improve or make better
- Family values, faith-based, religion
- Dictator, coup, communists
- Slanted, unfair, wrong
- Environmentalism, recycling
- Grown by hippies without chemicals
- Hunch, speculation, opinion, guess

Adapted from “Improving How Scientists Communicate About Climate Change,”
To engage diverse publics, scientists must focus on ways to make complex topics personally relevant.

Framing Science

Matthew Nisbet and Chris Mooney

“Framing Science” Science, April 2007

To engage diverse publics, scientists must focus on ways to make complex topics personally relevant.

Matthew Nisbet and Chris Mooney

“Framing Science” Science, April 2007
What is messaging?

1. Understand your audience.

2. Develop your message.

3. Practice and deliver your message.
What is a message?

• A concise point you want the audience to know, remember, or act upon

• It makes clear why your issue is important in the audience’s world

• It is as short and direct as possible.
What makes a good message?

Benefit

- What have we learned?
- What difference does it make?
- What is the benefit to the public?
- What does it mean to your audience?
What makes a bad message?

- What methodology was used
- Where we’ve published
- Who our partners are
- How we got funded
- Previous work we’ve built on
What is messaging?

1. Understand your audience.

2. Develop your message.

3. Practice and deliver your message.
Test and Practice Your Message

• Make sure everyone involved is using the same message

• Conduct practice interviews

• Review talking points and likely questions
Deliver Your Message

- Use plain language and familiar terms.

- If you can say it with a four letter word, do so.

- If your sentence is longer than 20 words, break it into two sentences.

- Use familiar comparisons and examples.
Deliver Your Message

“Tell ‘em what you’re gonna tell ‘em.”

“Tell ‘em.”

“Tell ‘em what you’ve told them.”
What is messaging?

1. Understand your audience.

2. Develop your message.

3. Practice and deliver your message.