

Building Public Support for Floodplain Management Guidebook

February 2010 Version



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Photos from cover (left to right, top to bottom):

FEMA Photo ID# 42491, Arkansas 2009, FEMA Project Specialist meets with Woodruff County Judge

FEMA Photo ID#42423, American Samoa 2009, A villager asks government officials about better shelters

FEMA Photo ID# 22717, Louisiana 2006, FEMA Public Affairs Officer Dave Passey talks to reporters in front of cruise ships

Photo courtesy of Steve Samuelson, Lyon County, Kansas held a poster contest on flood safety messages. The winner is holding the first prize: a weather alert radio. The top three posters were placed in public places around town.

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Introduction

The problem. Floodplain management is a challenging profession. It requires expertise and knowledge of physical and natural processes, engineering, construction, the law, and administration, among other subjects. It is also challenging because flooding conditions seem to be getting worse and many people do not see the need for, or do not want to cooperate with, efforts to better manage existing and future development.

One reason for these challenges is that many people do not see themselves as part of the problem. For example:

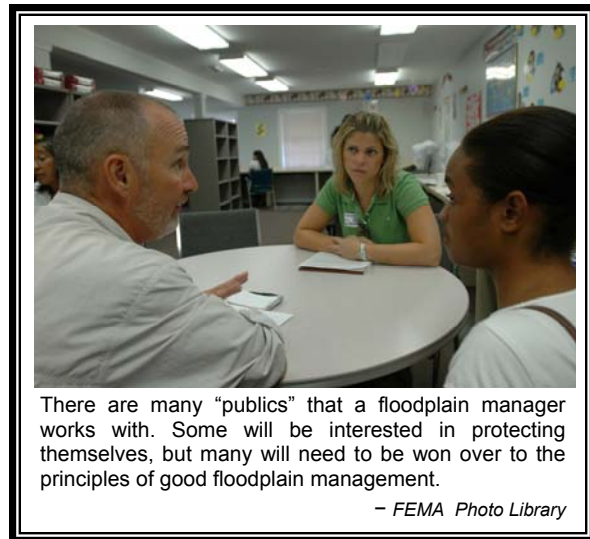
- Most of the public views a flood as something for the government to fix or for the government or insurance companies to pay for after it happens.
- Builders and developers can make money building on inexpensive land without paying the price for flooding to their developments.
- Elected officials often see floodplain management and the National Flood Insurance Program as a Federal program, not related to their daily needs or local issues.

In fact, people who live in, build on, travel through, and work in floodplains *are* part of the problem; *but*, they are part of the solution, too. Just as knowledge of natural processes and the law are important, a good floodplain manager should know how to work with people and build their support. This guide shows how this can be done.

The public. Who are these people you need to win over? As a public official, the “public” can be your customer, client, boss, or adversary. The public can be the people you need to cooperate with your program, to finance your program, or even to implement your program. They can be property owners, permit applicants, builders, developers, special interest groups, such as neighborhood associations and environmental organizations, and elected officials.

All of these “publics” should be seen as stakeholders in improving floodplain management in your community. Winning their support is important because:

- What they do is important to what you do,
- The public is your boss (or your boss’ boss) and it’s always good to have the boss’ support,
- They can be your best allies and advertisers in support of your program,
- More things get done with willing partners, and
- Work is more fun with people on your side.



There are many “publics” that a floodplain manager works with. Some will be interested in protecting themselves, but many will need to be won over to the principles of good floodplain management.

— FEMA Photo Library

Floodplain managers. There are many jobs a floodplain manager can hold. You are probably not a public information officer or public relations specialist, but you are an important (and sometimes the only) contact the public has with your local government and our profession.

The primary emphasis of this guide is on helping the local permit official, but the good practices reviewed here can help other offices and people involved in floodplain management, including emergency managers, engineers, code officials, planners, mitigators, and those in the private sector.


Getting public support. How do you know when you have public support? You will see things like these:

- People agree that a problem or opportunity exists,
- People understand the need to support your program for the long-term community good,
- People will not stop you from completing your job or mission,
- People will ask their elected officials to support you, and
- People are willing to commit money, time, or energy to address the problem.

This definition of success works whether the people you deal with are permit applicants, floodprone property owners, builders, or elected officials. They're all part of your public. How can you be successful? This guide provides a variety of good practices in four parts.

1. General Principles – guidance that is good for all situations
2. Face to Face with the Public – how to win people over, one at a time
3. Reaching Out to the Public – how to build support from different groups
4. Taking the Initiative – building support for a new program

You are encouraged to review these four general approaches and the many good practices explained here. Then, pick those that work best for you.

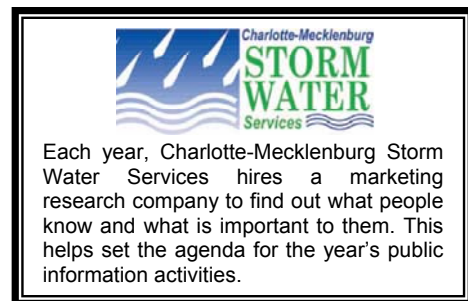
 Throughout this guide you'll see the “thumbs up” sign. These sections are some tips and quotes from your fellow floodplain managers who have had success building public support.

General Principles

A review of the literature and discussions with experienced floodplain managers found numerous ways to be effective in building public support. These have been summarized under the following Top Ten General Principles.

1. Know your public. The public will want to know how your project or action will affect them, so relate the message to what's important to the audience. You have competition – what you want people to do competes with behaviors and actions they are already undertaking. For example, unless they've just been flooded, most people care more about the appearance of their homes than protecting them from a rare flood occurrence. Your message will need to relate flood protection to property appearance, saving money, preserving their home's value, or other things that are important to them. You can find out what they are interested in by:

- Tallying complaints and inquiries,
- Conducting formal surveys,
- Having a customer satisfaction input web page,
- Asking your elected officials, and
- Above all, listening to people.



2. Explain the problem. Most people view floodplain regulations as a restriction on their freedom to do what they want with their property, not something that will help them. This view changes when they accept that they have a problem. Therefore, you want to get the people you are dealing with to acknowledge that there is a flood problem that needs attention. If they are at risk, be sure they understand the repercussions.

Even if their property is not in the floodplain, most people are still affected by flooding. They may have to drive through the floodplain on their way to work or school every day. They or someone they know may put themselves at risk trying to rescue or evacuate flood victims. Their business, their employer, or the stores they depend on may close if they're flooded. Their taxes will pay for flood fighting, rescue, clean up, repair, and recovery efforts. The impact of flooding goes well beyond the properties mapped as being in the regulatory floodplain.

Explaining the problem helps people make decisions based upon the facts. Be sure to show the impact that what they want to do (or don't want to do) has on others. It really helps if people understand that they may be part of the problem.

Local Flood Facts

Relate the flood problem to your audience's situation. You can collect local and historical flood facts from your local mitigation or floodplain management plan.

- How many homes were destroyed or damaged by the last flood?
- Did anyone get killed by the flooding? What were the circumstances?
- What was the average flood insurance claim?
- How many homes were not insured?
- How many businesses were unable to reopen after the flood?
- Were there mold, mosquitoes, unsafe drinking water, or other health problems?

Armed with these facts, you can better explain the flood problem people face in terms they can relate to.

- 3. Explain the solutions.** It doesn't do much good to scare people about the flood threat if they don't know what to do about it. Make sure they know how to build properly, how to protect a floodprone house, and how to help preserve water quality and habitats. Explain the options and show how even small pro-active steps can help. Show how your and other government agencies review alternatives and decide on which solutions they pursue. Encourage people to have flood insurance, too. If they're helped after a flood with an insurance claim payment, they will be more supportive of your efforts.



"Encourage the purchase of flood insurance. People who are covered are less likely to be upset at or sue your community after a flood." – Edward A. Thomas, Esq.

- 4. Empower them to act.** People need to recognize that they can have an impact. Reducing flood losses is not a job reserved only for the government. When it comes to protecting their own property, individuals are the most important actors. People are responsible for their own actions. If they don't follow the rules, it may adversely affect their own property, their neighbors, their community, and the environment.
- 5. Communicate to the audience.** Put yourself in the audience's shoes. Avoid technical terms ("discharge") and government jargon ("BFE") when talking to the lay person. Avoid terms that are often confusing ("mitigation," "100-year flood"). Be interesting. Make your written materials and presentations something that won't put you or your audience to sleep. Add photos and color to a PowerPoint or a newsletter article. Use personal experience stories. Remember though, you're not trying to impress – you're trying to assist.



"Don't be cocky – be credible." – Cindy Crecelius, CFM, former Ohio State NFIP Coordinator

- 6. Be positive.** Show the good reasons for your program and how it's related to what's important to the audience. Development regulations prevent flood damage, save lives, preserve local businesses and jobs, etc. Following the rules will mean less flood damage, lower insurance premiums, and a healthier stream. A floodplain acquisition project is more than just fixing a problem – promote the positive aspects of getting a new community park.
- 7. Use multiple methods.** Reinforce the message from different credible sources – your words, outreach projects, media materials, campaigns, your fellow co-workers. Public agencies have many ways to send out a message – e.g., signs in public parks, brochures in city hall, websites, inserts in utility bills, and the actions and statements of all employees. At the same time, be sure that the multiple messages are clear and consistent. Don't trust word of mouth alone to convey important messages – put it in writing, too.



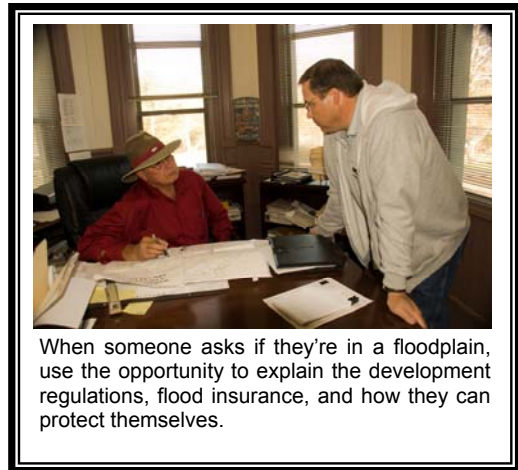
Greenville County, South Carolina, inspection staff complete a checklist at every site visit and leave a copy with the owner/builder. This helps the owner or builder better understand what the requirements are, and they can keep it for future reference.

- 8. Use the networks.** People talk to each other, especially their friends and neighbors. You've probably seen the trouble caused by one outspoken, but misinformed, resident. The powers of informal neighborhood networks can be harnessed for your messages if you spend extra time with the leaders who influence the others. Studies of why people retrofit their floodprone homes have found that the most frequently mentioned source of information was not the government, but a neighbor or friend who had retrofitted. Reach out to neighborhood associations and other organizations and offer to make presentations at their meetings.
- 9. Remember the big picture.** Your efforts should be part of bigger operations that deal with surface water problems, land use, public safety, housing improvement, etc. The public sees you as an employee of your local government, not as a floodplain manager. Know what the other offices are doing and make sure that all of you are consistent and mutually supportive. You can also coordinate with the other offices and take advantage of their messages, such as energy conservation, better housing, or recreational development.



"Think holistically. The more comprehensive your program is, the larger your constituencies can be." – Ann Patton, Tulsa Partners, Tulsa, Oklahoma

- 10. Take advantage of opportunities.** Floods in your community, floods elsewhere in the country, permit applications, meetings, or even chance encounters all offer opportunities. Use people's immediate interest in the topic of flood protection to give messages appropriate for the situation. For example, you shouldn't have much trouble telling people who have just been flooded that they are at risk. Seize the opportunity to remind them that it can happen again and that they should be working with your program to prepare for the next flood.



27/9/3

The Center for Risk Communication (www.centerforriskcommunication.com) recommends a simple rule of thumb to quickly and efficiently make a point: Put your message into 27 words that can be stated in 9 seconds with 3 key messages. This guide has some examples of such messages that you may want to tailor to your situation and use when you speak to the city council, a neighborhood association, a reporter, or someone who needs to know about floodplain management.

27/9/3 Message for Property Owners

1. Your house will flood someday
2. Flooding will cause extensive damage, pain and suffering
3. You can protect yourself with insurance and retrofitting

The Four-Point Consent-Building Method

In some cases, it is important that you stop and think before you act or talk to the public. Doing or saying the wrong thing can set you back. There are several simple approaches to working through a situation that can build support for floodplain management projects and activities. The “Four-Point Consent-Building Method” is just one of them that the Ohio Department of Natural Resources learned about from the Institute for Participatory Management and Planning. The Institute recommends a four step approach that can both cool down a confrontation and build consensus and support. The approach is built on four premises:

1. People need to know how your project or action affects them.
2. They need to feel that the proposed project or action is fair.
3. They need to know that the decision-making process is sound and objective.
4. They need to feel that they had a role in developing the project or action.

Ohio’s Floodplain Management Program staff find the following variation on the Institute’s four step “life preserver” to be very helpful in many different venues, such as face to face encounters, public presentations, and committee meetings.

1. *Make sure everyone agrees there’s a problem.* The problem may be a recent flood, the threat of a flood, too much development, loss of habitat, or whatever caused you to get together. Everyone needs to agree that your project or action addresses something that affects their quality of life.
2. *Make sure they agree you are the right people to deal with it.* You have the technical expertise and training on the subject matter. You work for the office responsible for, and with the authority to tackle, the problem. In fact, it would be irresponsible of you to not address the problem. On the other hand, they own the property in question and have a duty to protect current and future occupants. Recognize that they have expertise, too. Together you have the knowledge and the duty to tackle the problem.
3. *Review approaches that look sensible to all.* Make sure all suggestions are discussed. Be ready to explain how you see things should work and why (in non-technical terms).
4. *Agree that not everyone will be happy, but that the approach selected makes the most sense.* You probably can’t get unanimous support. A majority vote may leave some feeling that they’re losers. Therefore, *consensus* is preferred, i.e., something everyone can live with. If you have to, settle for *consent*, i.e., permission to proceed, even though everyone doesn’t completely agree. It helps to know what conditions will gain their consent and what they will oppose to an extent that you cannot proceed.

For more information on the Institute for Participatory Management and Planning’s programs, see www.ipmp.com.

Face to Face With the Public

Is It Your Job or Is It Your Joy?

Before you ask people to support your program, ask yourself, “Why would they listen to me?” Are you a credible source of information? Are you someone people want to talk to? Take a quick self-test and see if you can answer “yes” to the following five questions:

1. **Do you know what you’re talking about?** People respect those with technical knowledge. They will accept the bad news (e.g., it will cost more to build here) if they know it comes from a credible source. Are you credible? If you’re in the floodplain management business, you can become knowledgeable and show it by becoming certified in your field.



2. **Do you like your job?** Do you care? If you do, it will show. If you want people to agree with you, you have to believe in your work and show it. Actions speak louder than words.

👍 “Do you go to your j-o-b or your j-o-y? If you like what you're doing it shows.” – Tom Hirt, CFM, FEMA

3. **Do you know why you’re doing it?** Do you have a sense of mission or do you view your job as grudgingly enforcing some unwelcome federal mandate? Do you know the history and reasons why your program or rules are the way they are today? Or, do you just tell people they have to do something “because?”

👍 “People on the front lines have to get it and buy it.” – Kyle Dreyfus-Wells, Chagrin River Watershed Partners, Willoughby, Ohio

4. **Do you like people?** Most of society’s activities, from running a business to government programs, depend on the support of people, be they customers, clients, constituents, co-workers, or comrades. Do you want to help people avoid the loss and suffering from floods?

👍 Greenville County, South Carolina, took the attitude that a permit office should want return business, so they treat applicants like customers. Now, the office only hires people who want to work as part of a team and who want to help their customers.

5. **Is it *your* community, too?** Are you a fellow resident, a part of the community that you work for? Do you want to see it become a better place in the future?

👍 Before he was a floodplain manager, Mike Prough ran an auction company. He knew most of Jersey County’s residents and most of them knew him. He also knew how to treat a customer. These traits paid off when it was time to go after violators. He found that one of the most effective ways to convince people to bring their properties into compliance was that compliant properties keep the County in the NFIP, so their friends and neighbors could still get flood insurance.

👍 “HELPING OUR CITIZENS IS OUR BUSINESS” – Reminder at the end of every e-mail sent out by Gene Henry, CFM, Hillsborough County, Florida.


Talking to People

You meet face to face with the public every day. Here are some good practices on how to gain people's support during these meetings and encounters.

1. **Know your audience.** Are you talking to a lawyer? A builder? A recent flood victim? You'll want to explain things differently depending on your audience.
2. **Listen to them.** It takes two to communicate. What's your communication style? Do you stop and give the other person a chance to talk? Do you ask follow up questions? Do you ask them if you answered their question? Do you watch for signs that they've given up on you by averting their eyes, not following up on their questions, or walking away?


Try this: Listen to their story. Give them a chance to unload what may be worrying them. Be sympathetic. Then, take their story and fold it into what you want to say. Show how their experiences support your program.

3. **Treat them with respect.** They pay your salary and they deserve to have their needs met. Even if someone is not familiar with the details of your job, you should still treat that person the way you'd like to be treated. See the table on the next page for examples of how to say it better when you talk to people and the section on page 11 on communication pointers.

 "Most important of all – be polite and treat every one that you meet with respect. I went as far as filling out the floodplain development permits for people while they sat in my office with me. Then all they had to do was sign them. Those people told their friends it wasn't so bad to get a permit and the word got around." – Steve Samuelson, CFM, Floodplain Manager, Lyon County, Kansas

There are little things you can do to show your respect. Pay attention when someone talks. Walk around the counter to meet the public face to face, on equal terms. If you need to explain a technical term, do it as a matter of fact, not in conveying that they must be stupid not to know it. Ask if you've answered all their questions.

4. **Show the reason for the rule.** There are reasons for the rules that you are charged with enforcing. Taking time to explain them will ease your work and gain support from the person you're talking to. It helps if everyone remembers the "big picture" goals of protecting lives, reducing property damage, and preserving habitat.

 "We all know how people feel when they are told they can't do something. Hence having a reason for the 'rule' becomes paramount." – Steve Mitchell, CFM, Director of Planning and Zoning, Pascagoula, Mississippi

5. **Show them how they benefit.** Many people assume that if the government is involved, it's contrary to their own interests. Help them understand that floodplain management rules are designed to protect people and their property. When people realize that there is something they can do about reducing their exposure to damage, they are more apt to act in support of your program.

It also helps to show them how they benefit financially with lower insurance premiums by building above the flood protection elevation and supporting activities that are credited under the Community Rating System.

6. **Have backup.** People will want to search out more information to validate what they heard from you. Show them more sources of information, such as a website or a brochure. Make sure your co-workers will say the same thing you do. An unhappy citizen will want to “see the manager” or will talk to their councilman, so know whether your boss supports you.
7. **Be professional.** Do you complain about being overworked or underappreciated or having to enforce stupid rules? Or do you look for ways to improve things? A professional works on being able to say “yes” to the questions on page 7, like “Do you know what you’re talking about?” and “Do you know why you’re doing it?” A professional also looks sharp. A person who dresses neatly impresses people that he or she is serious about the work.
8. **Hone your skills.** Learn more about how to get agreement when you talk with people. For example, can you get the other person to agree that development which will likely result in liability to the community and even death is not a good idea? Does that other person see that his or her project would create such problems? This guide offers some help, but for more information on developing these skills, see references like *Getting to Yes* by Roger Fisher and William Ury or Ury’s *The Power of a Positive No*.

Talking to the Public: How to Say it Better	
What Not to Say	How to Say it Better
FEMA’s map put you in the floodplain.	It took nature thousands of years to form this area to carry and store excess water. Then one day, your house was built in the middle of it. With this map, we can see better where the floodwaters are likely to go.
You have to do this.	In order to protect you and your neighbors, the County adopted some rules...
I agree with you, but it’s a federal law.	I’ve seen homes that were flooded and people who didn’t have the money to rebuild. I don’t want to see this happen to you. These rules look tough when you’re dry, but after a flood people thank us for enforcing them.
There’s nothing you can do about it.	Let’s look at what you want to do and figure out a way to do it while staying within the rules. We may have to redesign what you originally had in mind.
There’s a 1 in 100 chance that you’ll be flooded.	There’s a good chance that you’ll be flooded. Maybe not today or tomorrow, but being in a floodplain means that you’re much more likely to get flooded than if you were on higher ground.
You can read it all in this engineering study.	Let me summarize what the engineers found out.
I’m on my coffee break. I’ll see you in 15 minutes.	Would you like to join me for a cup of coffee while we go over this?
I have no idea.	I don’t know, but let me run down the answer.
That’s not my department.	Let me get you in touch with the person responsible for that.

Why Doesn't the Public Get It?

One of the main reasons why floodplain managers have a tough job is that other people don't see things the same way. People have different backgrounds and experiences and often have agendas that reflect their own positions and concerns. Elected officials and other permit officials may want to quickly approve a development proposal because from their perspective, it's important to please a constituent, to bring in increased tax revenue, or to just say "Yes" so they can get on to their next job.

Others do not see that their actions may eventually result in harm to the future property owner, to emergency workers who assist in evacuations, to neighbors who may have flood waters pushed onto their property, to the habitat that may be destroyed, and to taxpayers who will eventually be stuck with paying to clean up a flooded mess or restore homes and businesses.

We expect of our elected and appointed officials to support development that will improve their community. Developers, builders, and many other well-connected people encourage their officials to support development because they will personally benefit. Making a profit from developing one's land is both a moral and legal right of ownership in our country.

Property owners usually have a right to be left alone to do with their own property what they want, so long as what they do does not harm others. Our society believes that by combining the initiative of this private right with the expectation that the government will be supportive of it, we have the best approach to achieving economically successful communities.

This equation for economic success places floodplain managers in a bind because we see the flooding and environmental impact problems and the related financial costs that comes with developments that don't follow the rules or that have an adverse impact on others. We know who will pay while developers and property owners try to move these costs away from themselves and into the public realm. This is called "externalizing" the costs of development, and when those costs are pushed over to government, sometimes called "socializing" the costs.

As long as developers, property owners, elected officials, and other members of the public assume (1) what they are doing is not a problem, (2) they have a right to do it, and/or (3) someone else will pay any costs, they are less likely to see things the same way that you do. Your job, and the biggest thing you can do to build public support, is to show people other ways to look at things.



Communication Pointers

Here are some techniques that can help you when things get “warm” in a face to face discussion with another person.

1. Listen actively

- Your body language shows you’re listening and engaged – have a neutral stance. Be assertive, but not aggressive. Keep a respectful distance that allows for personal space.
- Remove obstacles from between you and the other person (counters, desks, etc.) to encourage open communication.
- Increase your personal space if you start feeling defensive or attacked: back up slowly, turn your body away 45 degrees, place an object (chair, desk) between you and the other person.
- Asking clarifying questions to ensure you understand and to show you are listening – “Can you tell me more about that?” “Let me see if I understand you...”
- Paraphrase what the other person is telling you – “what I hear you saying is...,” “let me see if I have this right, you mean...” Paraphrasing allows you to probe to find out what the speaker is feeling about the subject, so that it can be addressed.
- Ask for what you need – “I need some time to consider what you’ve shared with me. Is there a time we could meet or speak to discuss it?”
- The better you understand the other person’s perspective, the more effective you’ll be at relating their concerns to your own and helping them to see your position.



2. Talk carefully

- Don’t take it personal, don’t make it personal. People get emotional about their property. It’s not about you.
- Stay off the soapbox. Don’t preach.
- Avoid generalizations – “Every time we try to...,” “Contractors always have a problem with this...,” “You’re never satisfied...”
- Use “I statements” rather than “You statements” to describe your perspective and take responsibility for how you feel. Don’t place blame on the other person – Try “When ‘x’ happens, I feel...” rather than “you made me angry when you...”
- Use plain, everyday language – the better you can translate from floodplain management jargon to lay terms, the more credible you’ll be.
- Seize the opportunity to educate. “Based on what you told me, I have some information to share that would help...”

3. Have productive meetings. Support for a program can be lost during a boring, unproductive, or confrontational meeting. One way to ensure productive meetings is to have it properly facilitated. This can be done by a professional or a lay person skilled in meeting procedures. You can find many good ideas in *Basic Facilitation Skills*, a primer on how to make a meeting work for you. It can be found in the resource center of the International Association of Facilitators’ website, www.iaf-world.org.

Reaching Out to the Public

Outreach Projects

Rather than just respond to an inquiry or wait for a permit application, you can reach out to build public support. Outreach projects should be considered the first tier of a two-tier public information approach – get people interested. The second tier is the references, libraries, websites, and personnel that can provide more detailed information and site-specific advice to those who want to learn more.

Examples of outreach projects include newsletters, newspaper articles and supplements, signs, websites, blogs, Facebook pages, Podcasts, presentations to neighborhood associations or civic organizations, brochures, flyers, cable television “crawlers,” and message boards. The Community Rating System credits outreach projects. The best guidance on conducting them can be found in *CRS Credit for Outreach Projects*, which is available free from NFIPCRS@iso.com.

1. Follow the guidelines. The CRS publications include their guidelines for outreach projects that are similar to this guide’s General Principles:

1. An initial outreach document should not be long and detailed. The objective is to raise the property owner’s interest by explaining the general idea of flood protection.
2. The message must be clear and unambiguous. It should be consistent throughout the material used. It should be written to be understood by the lay person.
3. The information should be geographically personalized so that readers see that it specifically addresses their situation.
4. The recipient must view the information source as credible, authoritative, and relevant.
5. The information should cover the risk of flooding without being too technical. Property owners must be convinced that they will be flooded someday.
6. The message must clearly articulate the most desirable measures. These measures must be appropriate for the hazard, affordable, and perceived as “realistic” by a property owner. They should fit in with the appearance of the area’s housing.
7. The information should discuss the costs and benefits of various protection measures.
8. Because no retrofitting measure is foolproof, especially against higher, less frequent floods, flood insurance should always be recommended.
9. A comprehensive program that reinforces the message from several sources at the local level is more productive.

– *CRS Coordinator’s Manual*, 2007, page 330-6



Outreach projects should be short and simple messages to advise the public that there is a problem and there is something they can do about it.

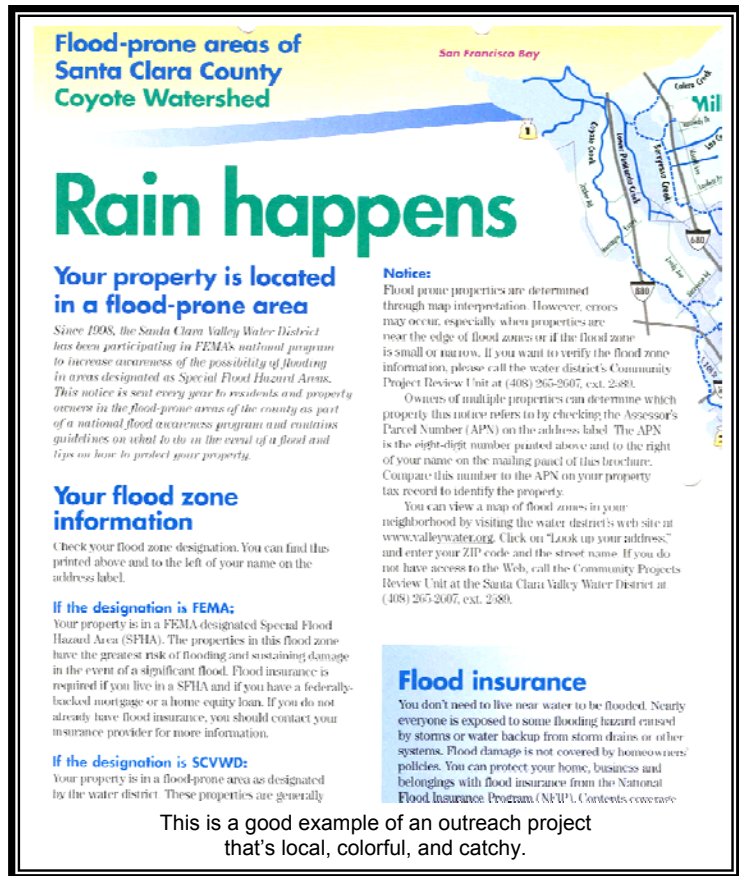


Outreach projects reach out to groups like this neighborhood association
– courtesy City of Gainesville, Florida

2. **Make them local.** Too often projects are copied from other communities or national models that may or may not be locally relevant. A recently completed evaluation of the CRS credits concluded that communities were not doing enough to address special local audiences. Because of this, the CRS is promoting more locally designed programs through its public information program strategy credit.

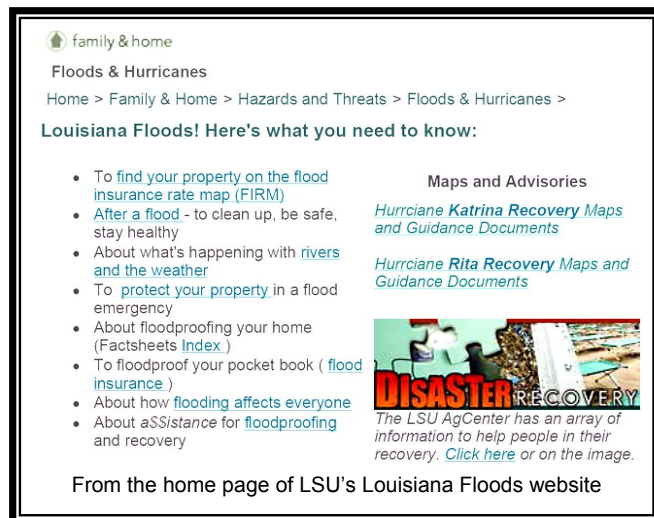
3. **Make them interesting.** Printed materials are more likely to be read if they are colorful and have photos or graphics. Talks and presentations work best if the speaker is believable and enthusiastic and the PowerPoints have more pictures than words.

4. **Go digital.** More and more people get their information through the Internet. Most communities have their own websites. Does yours have a floodplain management page? The CRS provides credit for websites with information on the local flood hazard, flood insurance, ways to protect a house from flooding, and permit requirements.



You don't have to reinvent the wheel – you can have links to county, regional, state or FEMA web pages on topics relevant to your situation. Two good examples of such pages are run by the University of New Orleans (<http://FloodHelp.uno.edu>) and Louisiana State University (LouisianaFloods.org).



Digital approaches can also greatly reduce your costs. Send a newsletter on floodplain management topics out by e-mail to subscribers on flood topics. Or send it via a blog with RSS feed, a Podcast, a video on YouTube, or Facebook page. Put large publications on a CD (see the marketing brochure story on the next page and the Arizona Association's use of e-mail on page 22).



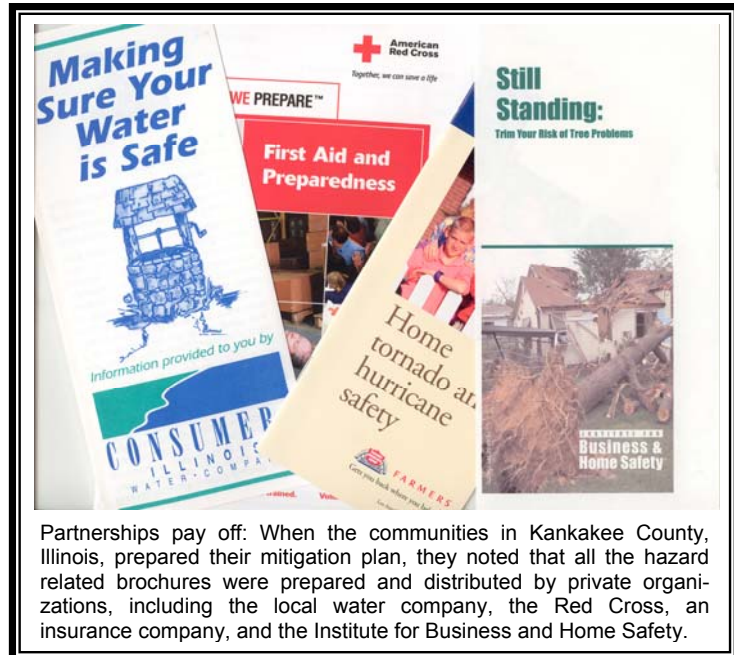
5. Develop a master strategy. Go beyond an ad hoc program that uses available materials. The CRS strongly encourages a public information program strategy that follows these steps:

- Design the strategy with a team that includes members from your target audience,
- Make sure the team understands the local flood hazard,
- Agree on the flood safety and property protection measures appropriate for that hazard,
- Review the flood-related public information activities currently being implemented within the community (including those by non-government agencies),
- Set goals for the program,
- Determine the outreach projects that will be done each year to reach the goals, and
- Monitor and evaluate the projects each year.

Charlotte-Mecklenburg Storm Water Services prepares a master public relations plan each year, which is described on the next page.

 <p>How They Did It: Marketing Brochure on Natural Floodplain Functions</p> <p style="background-color: #76923c; color: white; padding: 2px; text-align: center;">Floodplain Preservation</p>  <p>▲ Coon Creek at Dancing Willows</p> <p>This project rebuilt an existing irrigation reservoir into a regional water quality and flood routing pond. The project approach was handled in a more natural manner by utilizing vegetative methods for stream stabilization, minimal structures for grade control, and creating meandering recreational trails.</p> <p>Regional Detention Grade Control Structures Floodplain Preservation Open Space Riparian Preservation Trails / Recreation Wetland / Water Quality</p>	<p>In early 2007, the Denver area Urban Drainage and Flood Control District developed a marketing brochure to help influence land use decisions early in the development process. The District wanted to present project proponents with alternatives to traditional drainageway solutions that were more focused on sustainability, promoted the natural and beneficial functions of floodplains, and better integrated with the built environment. The District believed that floodplain preservation, sustainability, enhancing natural floodplain function, and hazard mitigation goals could all be addressed with a more thoughtful approach to development in and around stream corridors.</p> <p>As a first step, key community officials and developers were interviewed in order to determine the acceptance of the proposed marketing brochure and to gather guidance on content. The outcome was a tri-fold brochure format with a mini CD. The mini CD includes a policy presentation arguing the benefits of floodplain preservation to help developers be convinced this is a good business decision. Several past projects were selected as business cases in order to present the financial side of the argument. There was also a need identified to showcase good examples of projects that exhibited non-traditional stream treatments for both new development and infill projects. Reference links are provided and regulatory issues discussed.</p> <p>The background and case studies can be seen at www.udfcd.org</p> <p style="text-align: right;">— Michelle Leach, Matrix Design Group</p>
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6. Share the workload. The CRS outreach project evaluation also found that communities that built cooperative programs with other public agencies and private organizations were more successful in reaching their publics and in getting CRS credit. There are many private companies and civic, business, and professional organizations interested in flood protection, often for their own protection, but also because they want to live in a community that will be viable after a disaster. For example, you could approach the local Toastmasters International club to see if it would sponsor presentations on flood protection.



Develop messages showing the connections between others' concerns and yours, as illustrated below. See also the section on working with stakeholders and allies on page 20.

One of the best government groups to coordinate with is the office responsible for water quality and for meeting your community's National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) obligations. These offices usually have their own outreach projects and clean water is a topic that people are interested in year round. Joint projects save money, too.

How They Did It: Joint Agency Public Relations Plan



Each year the City of Charlotte's stormwater office and its County counterpart prepare a joint plan for public information. The attitude of the participants is expressed on the first page of the plan, "Education knows no jurisdiction. When citizens request service, it matters not where it comes from as long as the service is complete and helpful."

The FY 2008 plan sets four goals that show how floodplain management activities are coordinated with other priorities:

1. Demonstrate to the public that Storm Water Services benefits the whole community;
2. Change public behaviors to reduce sources of water pollution;
3. Change public behaviors to protect lives and property from flooding; and
4. Create awareness among employees that they are part of a joint agency.

An implementation schedule and budget identifies 45 projects to be implemented in FY 2008. These include utility bill inserts, newsletters, website pages (<http://stormwater.charmeck.org>), brochures, a workshop for real estate agents, adopt-a-stream, storm drain marking, and the "Big Sweep" where citizens clean trash from creeks.

Success of each project is reviewed at an annual meeting of the drafting staff. They also review the findings of their annual public opinion survey (see box, page 3).

The Media

“There is no better vehicle for getting information to the public than the newspaper, radio or TV station. The media are the eyes and ears of the community. The general public looks to the media to report all sides of an issue.” – *Building Support for Increasing User Fees*, USEPA, 1989, page 9.

👍 “The media can be your worst enemy or your best ally.” – Mike Prough, CFM, Code Administrator, Jersey County, Illinois

Here are some good practices that can help get your local media to help you build public support for your programs.

1. **Develop your contacts.** There are two types of contacts to develop: those in charge of the editorials and the reporters who cover your area. Larger news outlets often have city hall or environmental reporters. For smaller operations, both jobs may be held by the editors or news directors. These people’s business is news and you can supply them with business – respond to their calls, stay in touch with them, and help them. Accessibility is critical. Be available for them. If you build a relationship of mutual trust and support, it will pay off later.

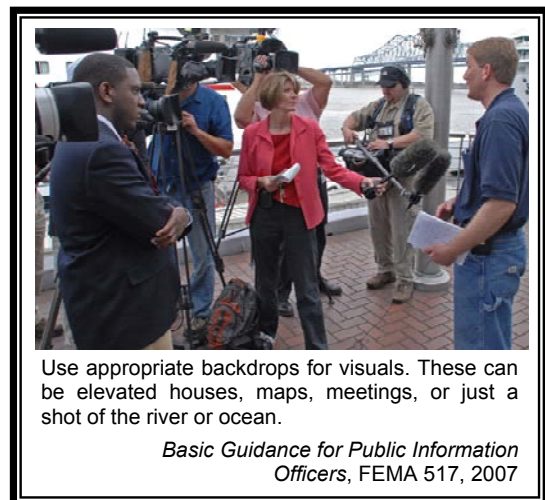
“Journalists will be more open to your concerns and priorities if they know you’re factual, cooperative, straightforward and not trying to manipulate them.” – *Building Support for Increasing User Fees*, USEPA, 1989, page 10.

2. **Educate your contacts.** Newspapers, radio, and TV staff want facts. Hold background sessions or briefings. Keep them posted with fact sheets, e-mails, phone calls, and frequent contacts. Some local officials have their own newspaper columns.

👍 “Reporters, for the most part, are generalists who are parachuting into a topic. They are not experts in your field. So, keep in mind that half the time they will start off not knowing what the heck you are talking about, or only be vaguely aware of it. Before the interview concludes, you should get a feel for whether the reporter truly understands whatever point you are trying to make. If you sense any uncertainty on the reporter’s part, spend more time on the phone or in the interview and try other ways to get your point across.” – Greg Garland, Reporter, Baltimore Sun

3. **Provide appropriate materials.**

- Newspapers and television like visuals, but don’t just show flood scenes and suffering. Include illustrations of good practices.
- Newspapers will have more space for the details, but think in terms of the headline.
- Radio and TV can record a live happening, like a house raising.
- Most press releases are now done by e-mail. Use a catchy subject line. Check with your public information office for format and clearance.



- Remember the General Principles on pages 3 – 4, especially # 5 – avoid the jargon and make it interesting.
- Make sure your information is consistent with other messages being disseminated by other offices in your agency or route all media correspondence through the same office.
- Do it face to face.

👍 “Soon after I was hired, I sat down with each local newspaper and radio station, gave them the County’s ordinance, and explained how I was going to enforce it.” – Mike Prough, CFM, Code Administrator, Jersey County, IL

- Reporters are professionals and often appreciate constructive comments if their work has errors.
- Make sure you meet reporters’ deadlines. If you’re late, the story may have already gone to press without your information.
- Many reporters like sound bites.

4. Use events to generate coverage. Events make news – you will have the media’s attention. If you are sensitive to the suffering and the timing, you can even take advantage of news coverage of a disaster, such as a flood in a different community, to help promote your message. A great example of good timing is the editorial to the right. While you don’t have to prepare a news release or a public service announcement, you should have fact sheets or a media kit ready to make your message clear to reporters.

5. Make your own events. You don’t need a flood to make your point. Take advantage of ground breaking or dedication ceremonies for flood control facilities, release of a new floodplain map, the presentation of a CRS plaque, or an annual flood awareness week or month.

Remember: one of your key “publics” is your elected officials. They will help you get media attention. A photo op of the mayor signing the proclamation for flood awareness week may draw the reporters and be a venue for your message.

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OUR VIEWS

Flooding disaster holds a lesson

Pierce County officials should resist calls to undermine tough flood zone rules that limit building and save taxpayers money.

Pierce County residents dodged a bullet – or more precisely, a deluge – in the great storm that flooded much of Southwest Washington this week.

But that near-miss still holds a lesson.

This time, even those who live near the Puyallup River and other areas hit hard by flooding in the past decade suffered no significant damage. No South Sound rivers topped their banks, and Pierce County officials said most problems were caused by levees that plugged storm drains.

So county residents can be grateful that state and federal disaster declarations won't be needed to help with the kind of cleanup and rebuilding efforts underway in other parts of the state.

The storm should serve as a cautionary tale, however, for county residents and officials involved in a current controversy over floodplain regulations.

Since 1996, county government has spent at least \$20 million on floodplain acquisition. The county has also built several "setback levees" that allow rivers to follow a more natural course. These levees not only mitigate flooding but also improve fish and wildlife habitat.

County Executive John Ladenburg has strongly backed a policy of managing flood plains with long-term sustainability and risk management in mind. Constantly building up levees is hugely expensive and not always effective. Restricting development in the most flood-prone areas makes more sense – and costs taxpayers less – in the long run.

Two years ago, the Pierce County Council approved a so-called "Directions" package of regulations designed to protect the county's most sensitive natural areas, including flood-prone areas and wetlands.

Since then, federal authorities have issued a new and more restrictive flood map based on a finding that lower Puyallup River levees may not withstand a 100-year flood. Although the federal map is not final yet, the county and the City of Fife are now using it to manage development in floodways.

That is why some county residents near the lower Puyallup are up in arms about "FEMA Nazis." They complain that the new rules preventing them from even rebuilding homes and other structures on their property.

The outcry prompted council members to order a review of the flood plain regulations. The county Planning Commission is considering amendments in hearings that will resume in January.

There may be some minor adjustments to the rules that make sense. But by and large, the commission and the council should stick with the 2005 policies. They are not only good for the environment but also – as this week's flooding demonstrates – highly prudent.

This type of media support is priceless.
– Tacoma News Tribune, December 6, 2007

Elected Officials

Your elected officials are a special audience that deserves special attention. Not only are they your boss, they have direct access to their constituency, the public you need support from. When seen in the big picture, their job and their interests are the same as yours. You should be able use that premise to identify ways where you can help each other.

👍 “[A permit applicant] will often times seek relief from his elected officials. Support from the elected officials is critical.... When one examines the CRS communities with the best ratings it becomes apparent the elected official’s support of the concept is a major contributing factor to that rating.”
– Steve Mitchell, CFM, Director of Planning and Zoning, Pascagoula, Mississippi

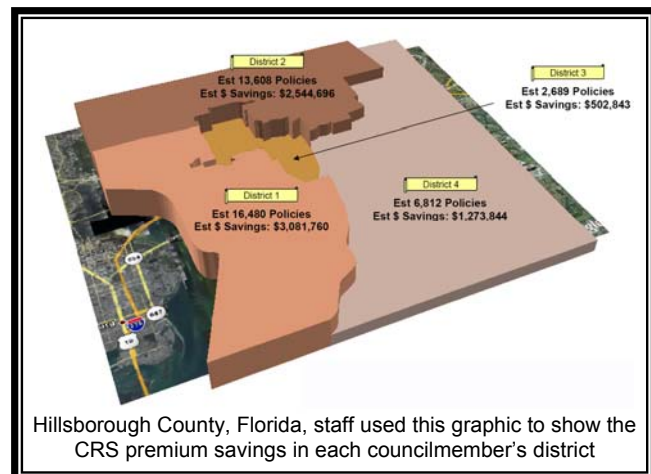
- 1. Know your officials.** What are their interests? What did they campaign on? What has been their experience with flooding? Who is chair of what committee? Who is the best person to brief on proposed new regulations? Are there key staff persons or assistants you should talk to first? Knowing the answers to these questions will greatly facilitate your work with your council or governing board.
- 2. Keep them informed.** Elected officials are responsible for your agency’s activities. They need to know what’s happening now and what is going to happen. They don’t appreciate surprises or blindsiding, so it helps to be the first to tell them of an impending problem, before it pops up.

👍 “Don’t keep elected officials in the dark. Let them know what is going on... before they get a phone call at home one evening from someone who is upset about being told to elevate a structure.” – Steve Samuelson, CFM, Floodplain Manager, Lyon County, Kansas

👍 Greenville County, South Carolina, staff hold workshops for County Council members before they start a new initiative. These are open to the public, so citizens hear the same things their representatives learn.

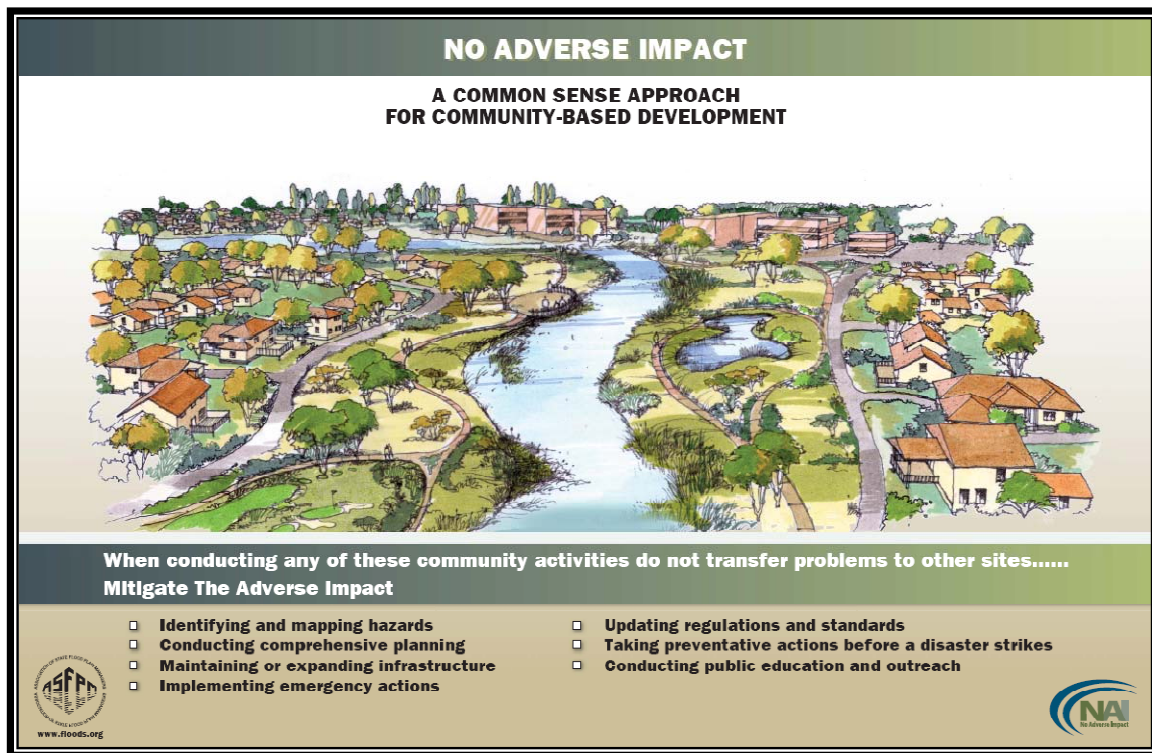
- 3. Show them the benefits.** The number one concern for many elected officials is “what will it cost and what are the benefits?” Give them the facts and background information in these terms (remember the General Principles). They should understand that there are costs to inaction, such as damage to public property, loss of tax base, and exposing the community to a lawsuit if people are flooded.

Make sure they see how their constituents benefit from your work. One effective way is to show how much residents are saving in flood insurance premiums under the Community Rating System. The graphic to the right shows an interesting way to convey this message. You can get the dollar savings for your community for each CRS class from your ISO/CRS Specialist.



4. **Use NAI.** ASFPM's No Adverse Impact program provides a basis for good floodplain management that elected officials can relate to. They do not want to see their constituents flooded or harmed due to the actions of someone else. They can become strong supporters of better programs once they realize that their community will pay the price of bad decisions over the long run, that the federal and state minimum requirements are not sufficient to adequately protect their citizens, and that they are liable for knowingly allowing flood problems to increase. NAI helps them understand these concepts and provides illustrations of good practices.

For more information and materials on NAI (like the poster below), see www.floods.org. There is also a good NAI factsheet for local officials at www.trorc.org/wq_flood.html.



5. **Give them the credit.** Your elected officials deserve the credit they're due for enacting, funding, and supporting your program. There are several ways where you can help each other. Examples include:

- Media events, such as a ground breaking in the district,
- Asking the councilmember to host or chair a public meeting in his/her district, and
- Helpful handouts that they can give to their constituents. If you design a brochure, flyer or guidebook with space for the official to put his/her name, you'll have a free distribution system for your message.

27/9/3 Message For Elected Officials

1. Anywhere it rains, it can flood
2. Flooded residents will be upset and may sue
3. Floodplain development regulations can prevent future flood losses

Stakeholders

Who are the key stakeholders for your work? You should develop a toolbox of different approaches for different audiences with different messages. Here are some good practices for reaching special audiences.

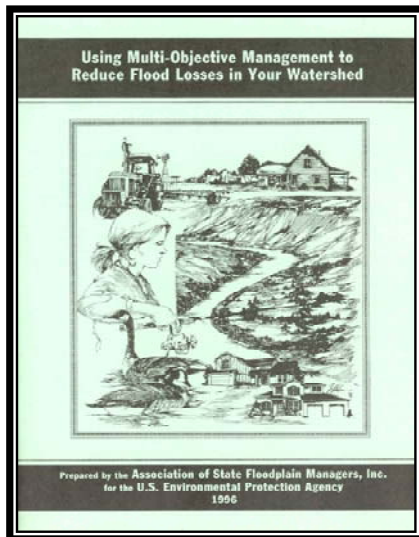
- 1. Meet your allies.** There are many others who are interested in seeing good floodplain management practices in your community. They may not know about flooding, but they may be very interested in related topics, such as Smart Growth, sustainability, water quality, habitat protection, fishing or boating. Set up meetings with these groups. You'd be surprised how much you have in common. The Big Hole watershed plan on the next page is a good example of divergent groups supporting strong floodplain standards.
- 2. Identify mutual concerns.** Many groups and people will support good floodplain management if they see how it supports their efforts.

Stakeholders

Here are some likely audiences that you may need to make a special effort to reach

- Property owners and neighborhood associations
- Contractors and home builders
- Chamber of commerce, business groups, professional associations
- Hunting, fishing, recreation or environmental organizations
- Non-English speakers
- Schools (public and private)
- "Good government" groups like the League of Women Voters and people interested in sustainability, smart growth, green development, and No Adverse Impact
- Fellow professionals, involved in water quality, stormwater management, water supply, and wetland protection

The floodplain is not just a hazardous area. The floodplain, the watershed, wetlands, and other flood-related areas have many different uses, most of them beneficial to the community. The multi-objective management approach brings together the people and groups that have interests related to all these water-related uses. It helps reduce conflicts and increase the opportunities for mutual support. Your flood loss reduction measures become tools to meet other objectives, too. By allying yourself with these other interests, you gain longer-lasting, broader support for your common concerns. – *Using Multi-Objective Management to Reduce Flood Losses in Your Watershed*, ASFP, 1996, page vi.



Using Multi-Objective Management to Reduce Flood Losses in Your Watershed reviews these mutual concerns for the following types of stakeholders.

- Recreation
- Fish and wildlife
- Water supply
- Water quality
- Urban redevelopment
- Economic development
- Housing improvement
- Agriculture
- Historic preservation
- Education
- Transportation and infrastructure

You can get a free copy of this reference at www.floods.org



How They Did It: Ranchers and Farmers Support Good Floodplain Management

Changes in the economy and demographics were affecting land use patterns along the Big Hole River in Montana. Traditional ranching and agriculture enterprises were suffering under a depressed agricultural economy. In order to survive, many landowners turned to selling their land for recreation and residential uses and prices. While these changes were not inherently bad, the lack of planning and community input to shape the future of the Big Hole was cause for concern. To complicate matters, the Big Hole watershed has multiple jurisdictions in addition to many public and private landowners and land managers. Within the watershed, there are four counties, all having unique and independent land use plans.

Local organizations responded to the need for coordinated land-use planning in the basin by forming the Big Hole River Planning Group in 1999. The Group's steering committee was comprised of landowners and other local stakeholder interests. For two years, the planning group focused on education, outreach and communication with the wider community. It received technical guidance from county planners, county commissioners, land trust experts, appraisers, real estate professionals and numerous others. Based on the input at public meetings, surveys, and many conversations around kitchen tables, the Big Hole Land-Use Plan was drafted in the spring of 2002. The plan was introduced through mailings, local press and a series of community meetings. The group found general support, but it was apparent that the plan would require revisions.

A second draft was released in the fall of 2002, accompanied by more public meetings and a response card to register support or opposition or comments. The final, resident-supported Big Hole Land-Use plan includes the following goals and guiding principles:

- Maintain the character of Big Hole River and valley, river corridor and open space, large ranches, healthy ecosystem, wildlife habitat.
- Protect the river corridor.
- Protect critical fish and wildlife habitat and winter range.
- Maintain open space and viewsheds.
- Maintain the quality of recreation experience with no development on the banks of the river.
- Target future development away from high-risk areas, such as forests and floodplains.
- Establish consistent river conservation standards (including a setback of 150 feet from the mean high water mark which may be increased or decreased to meet floodplain boundaries, floodway functions, and the riparian vegetative community).

Local rancher Randy Smith became a supporter of the land-use planning process. "I believe it is critically important to have local people direct planning," Smith said. "The plan strikes a good balance between landowner rights and guiding future development in this watershed."

- *From an article by Jennifer Boyer, Big Hole River Planning Group Director, in Natural News, USEPA, Region 8, Fall 2003*

3. **Know your audience.** This gets back to General Principle #1– relate the message to what’s important to the audience. Identify any special media that a particular group uses. More and more people get information from blogs, YouTube, or Facebook, which can be inexpensive digital ways to reach younger audiences. Non-English speakers may have their own newspapers and radio stations. Editors and managers of these organizations are often looking for newsletter copy or speakers for their meetings.
4. **Work with the leaders.** Give special attention to the leadership of the stakeholder organizations with background briefings, fact sheets, and copies of relevant studies and reports. Listen to them and their concerns. Recognize them and their efforts publicly to help them with their constituencies. Once you have champions for your cause, make sure they have all the information they need.
5. **Build their trust.** Work toward the time when the other organizations trust you and come to you for information, advice, or assistance. You can build their trust by doing what you said you were going to do and doing it on time. It may take many days of working together, but once they see that you are both a straight shooter and dependable, you can develop a mutually supportive relationship.
6. **Ask for their help.** You don’t have to spy on a group to learn about their concerns and priorities. Ask directly for their thoughts at meetings or for their comments on a specific written proposal. You can do this formally with an advisory board with representatives from the various stakeholder interests. This is often done when developing a plan or designing a new program (see the examples “How they did it” on pages 26 and 27).

👍 “If you want to build goodwill with the community, make them part of the process. It builds trust.”
Robert Hall, Floodplain Manager, Greenville County, South Carolina.

👍 When a large corporation’s executive was asked why he took the time to participate on the County’s Local Mitigation Strategy team, he answered simply “I live here.” – reported by Frank Reddish, Miami-Dade County Department of Emergency Management and Homeland Security.

How they did it: Using the Internet to Rally Stakeholders



The Town of Marana, Arizona, was faced with trying to define how FEMA floodplain management regulations treat non-levee embankments. In response to the Town’s concerns, Congresswoman Giffords introduced HR 4050, the Levee-Like Structure Consideration Act of 2007. By that time, many other Arizona communities had been presented maps or scenarios from FEMA showing their communities to be impacted by non-levee embankments.

John Hayes of Santa Cruz County initiated a mass email to various many members of the Arizona Floodplain Management Association. E-mails went back and forth with the authors’ theories on how these structures could be quantified to show that while they may not meet the NFIP requirements for levees (44 CFR 65.10), they did in fact affect floodwaters.

This mass email quickly started getting responses utilizing the “reply all” email function. Upon entering the chain, the entire history of the conversation could be reviewed. Eventually, the email chain was used to coordinate a meeting of the participants in Phoenix. That meeting pulled in email participants, the State, and Congressional staff. As a result of the meeting, Congressional staff became better informed about non-levee embankments and recognized the importance of the issue to Arizona communities. The email chain is being used to keep all interested parties updated on developments.

- 7. Work with the builders.** Builders and developers don't automatically oppose your regulations. They are usually more concerned about arbitrary requirements put in place with no warning or chance for comment. Remember that they are in business, and delays and unreasonable requirements can directly impact their revenue.

On the other hand, they know it's not good for business if the homes they built are flooded. Further, many builders and developers "get it" and want to avoid problem areas and use natural functions as amenities to help sell their properties. Denver's Urban Drainage and Flood Control District capitalized on this interest when it developed the marketing brochure described on page 14.

27/9/3 Message For Builders

1. Your site will flood someday
2. Flooded residents will be upset and may sue
3. Protect your investment by building right the first time

👍 Billerica, Massachusetts, prepared a guide to the Town's permit system. It took away the mystery of the bureaucracy and gave users some notion of what to expect in terms of the time needed to process a permit. Builders appreciated it.

- 8. Educate school children.** School children need to know about flood hazards and flood safety. School curricula are full with required subjects these days. However, teachers seem to find time for firemen and emergency managers. You can piggy back on this interest and work with your fellow local staff to include flooding in their programs.

School children also can be vehicles to reach two other special audiences – their parents and the media. Mom and Dad are likely to read the flood safety materials the kids bring home. Reporters are often interested in human interest stories, like the one to the right. Note that some people don't want their children's photos in the paper, so check with the school district's public information office first.

👍 The City of Austin, Texas, held a poster contest on "Turn Around – Don't Drown." It drew 267 students, aged 6 – 13. See the winners at www.ci.austin.tx.us/watershed/flood_poster.htm

👍 Charleston County, South Carolina has conducted a variety of projects to reach school children, including science fairs, "game shows" at school assemblies (with local media personalities as master of ceremonies), distributing Master of Disaster kits from the Red Cross, funding art and music production numbers on hazard-event themes, student-created media public service announcements (that were judged by a local TV meteorologist and a panel from a County committee), and scout patch programs. The County found that projects directed at young people are very successful at also reaching their parents, since the students talk about what they learned in school and will often convince their parents to take steps to minimize their hazard loss potential.



Taking the Initiative




Starting a New Project

Want to start a stormwater utility? Want to enact a tougher floodplain ordinance? Want to prepare a really effective mitigation plan? All of these initiatives are major undertakings and all will be much better with the support of the public. Before they are started, it is useful to plan out a strategy for building support for them. Here are some good practices.

1. **Poll the public.** As with General Principle #1, knowing the attitudes of the public and stakeholder groups before you begin can be very helpful. A good example of this the “How They Did It” story on floodplain maps on page 26.
2. **Work with your allies.** Build on the work and messages of the stakeholder groups like those listed on in the box on page 20. Piggy back on other initiatives, such as National Preparedness Month (September), the state’s hurricane safety week, or the contractors’ home improvement fair. Your biggest payoff may come with other departments in your own agency that are interested in starting their own wetlands protection, stormwater management, water quality improvement, or other initiative.
3. **Create an advisory body.** An advisory committee or task force that represents the various interests related to your initiative is universally recommended (and it receives extra credit under the CRS). Be sure to include people who oppose the initiative or don’t trust the government. There are many publications on how to make such a body work, two of which are quoted on the next page. See also the CRS’ *Example Plans* (free from NFIPCRS@iso.com) and *Getting Started: Building Support for Mitigation Planning* (FEMA 386-1, found in FEMA’s on-line library at www.fema.gov/library/index.jsp).

👍 “Good public policy happens at the intersection of grassroots citizens and technical experts.”
 – Dr. Mark Meo, University of Oklahoma

4. **Adopt a symbol.** A symbol, slogan, or logo can help people identify with your program. Think of the effectiveness of Smokey the Bear and “Turn Around, Don’t Drown.” The slogans work because they are clear, concise, and catchy.

 <p>What started as a joke by a citizen member of a flood committee became Sammy Sandbag, the mascot of the Village of Lansing’s (Illinois) flood protection program. Sammy was drawn at no cost by a friend of the committee member.</p>	 <p>Sammy Salamander lives in Greenville County, South Carolina. He teaches residents about water pollution, soil conservation, and stormwater management. See www.greenvillecounty.org for a fun interactive game for children.</p>	 <p>This phrase was developed by the National Weather Service to help remind people to avoid the number one cause of death during floods – driving in flooded areas.</p>
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A Testimonial for Public Involvement

Public involvement activities and education can help to overcome opposition to flood management projects. The key to success in this case and likely other projects is to use an interactive process to help municipal officials and the public realize the multiple benefits of flood management projects. From a start in February of 2000 to a finish six months later, public outcry had turned to public embrace.

- “Flood Management in Hart Park: From Abhorrence to Zeal” in Proceedings of the 2001 Annual Conference of the Association of State Floodplain Managers, Charlotte, NC.

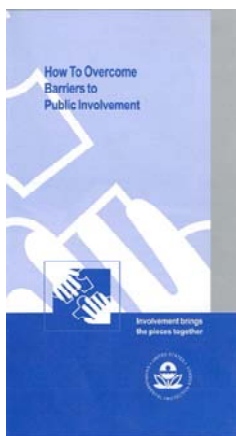
Making Plans that Matter – Citizen Involvement and Government Action

Dr. Ray Burby, FAICP, University of North Carolina
Journal of the American Planning Association, Winter 2003

The single most effective step planners can take to secure broader involvement by stakeholders is simply to invite a variety of groups to take part in the planning process. Beyond that, planners can induce greater participation by ensuring that participation is meaningful to citizens. Planners make participation meaningful by providing citizens with information about problems and alternative ways of solving them and by providing opportunities for dialogue among citizens and between citizens and planners. This can occur in the deliberations of advisory committees, discussions at facilitated meetings, and through other means. The key is for planners to work hard to both educate and learn from citizens. (page 44)

When planners in Florida and Washington involved a broader array of stakeholders in plan making, they produced stronger plans and policy proposals that were much more likely to be implemented than was the case when participation was limited. ... hazard-mitigation measures proposed in plans increased 72% (from an average of 2.9 to an average of 5.0) when the number of stakeholders who participated in making the plan increased from less than 5 to 10 or more. Implementation success more than doubled. Planners batted 50-50 (a success ratio of 1) when they involved few stakeholders in plan making, but this increased to a success ratio of 2.4 when they involved 10 or more stakeholders....

When property owners and environmental groups participated, plans were stronger on average, and proposals made in plans stood a much higher than average chance of being implemented. Since these two groups often have conflicting interests, it seems possible that citizen involvement processes that included them provided a forum in which consensus about appropriate policies could be achieved. (page 39)



How to Overcome Barriers to Public Involvement

- Assess before you act
- Provide transparency and access
- Avoid being an add-on
- Find people to involve
- Build capacity for involvement
- Get the right information to the right people at the right time
- Use the public's ideas in making decisions
- Evaluate your activities
- Involve those who traditionally don't participate

These pointers are from a helpful USEPA brochure that can be found at www.epa.gov

How They Did It: New Floodplain Maps



In 2001, Tropical Storm Allison caused widespread damage and killed 22 people in Harris County, Texas. FEMA and the Harris County Flood Control District initiated the Tropical Storm Allison Recovery Project (TSARP). There were three objectives:

- Better tools for planning and building flood control projects,
- A better public understanding of their risks, and
- Up-to-date Flood Insurance Rate Maps for the County.

A comprehensive approach was used to build public support for the program and the subsequent maps. It had five elements.

1. Public opinion polling – It was important for the agencies to determine what the public actually believed about flooding and flood risks, rather than what the agencies thought the public believed. A public opinion telephone poll called 511 randomly selected Harris County homeowners. The poll found the 93% of homeowners favored updating the county's floodplain maps.
 2. Message development – The polling's high level of support meant that the communications campaign should focus on solidifying support for the project, rather than changing the minority opinion. Four key messages and themes were developed:
 - (1) The majority of floodplain maps for Harris County were 20 years old, and all of the maps should be updated using the best available technology to assure their accuracy;
 - (2) Even if it increases the cost of insurance for some homeowners, it is better to update the County's floodplain maps to know who is at risk instead of waiting for the next big disaster;
 - (3) The mapping project was conducted jointly by the Flood Control District and FEMA; and
 - (4) The advanced technology used to update the maps was the same used to assess the damage and helped in the clean up and recovery efforts at Ground Zero in New York City.
 3. Stakeholder engagement – Four committees were organized to coordinate input:
 - Executive Committee, a select group of elected and appointed public officials
 - Technical Committee of local engineers
 - Stakeholder Committee: representatives from a cross section of Harris County ethnic, geographic, professional, and educational organizations
 - Users Group, floodplain administrators and others who regularly use the maps

Meetings were held on a regular basis to update each committee on the TSARP process, answer questions that they may have, and gain their input on issues as they arise. A speaker's bureau was also formed. Members gave over 60 presentations.
 4. Media relations – The team pursued special efforts like those discussed on pages 16 – 17.
 5. Materials development – These included:
 - A unique TSARP logo and brand for the project (see above)
 - The project website, www.tsarp.org
 - A project brochure that provides a broad overview of the project and its benefits.
 - A 36-page report entitled "Off the Charts," which was included in copies of the *Houston Chronicle* on the one year anniversary of Tropical Storm Allison.
- From "Public Education and Outreach Regarding a Major Reassessment of Local Floodplains: The Case of Harris County, Texas" in Proceedings of the 2003 Annual Conference of the Association of State Floodplain Managers, St. Louis, MO.

How They Did It: A Regional Floodplain Management Plan



The Maumee River Basin Commission covers parts of five counties around Fort Wayne, Indiana. The MRBC Master Plan was widely embraced by various agencies and interest groups that have become strong supporters and contributors towards its implementation. The MRBC Master Plan's initial success can be attributed to the public involvement and consensus building process followed throughout the study process. In short, this process involved:

- (1) Gathering input from various agencies, interest groups, and the general public by conducting several public meetings in various locations in the early stages of the study;
- (2) Acknowledging the receipt of, considering, and screening all suggestions offered by MRBC Board members, various agencies, environmental groups, farm interest groups, previous studies, and those identified by the consultant;
- (3) Wide distribution of the draft reports throughout the basin area, including all area libraries, and soliciting comments during an extended comment period; and
- (4) Documenting and responding to every comment received by preparing and publishing a separate report volume, and either incorporating the comments or providing a reason why they would not be incorporated.

The MRBC Flood Control Master Plan was able to foster a sometimes rare—but very much desired—broad consensus among various governmental agencies, agricultural interests, and environmental groups.

- From “Sharing the Challenge: Lessons Learned from the Maumee River Basin Master Plan Implementation” in Proceedings of the 2000 Annual Conference of the Association of State Floodplain Managers, Austin, TX.

How They Did It: Rebuilding Resident Confidence



In 1990, the Little Calumet River flooded higher than anytime in recorded history. Hundreds of homes in South Holland were damaged and residents were angry. They spoke out at Village Board of Trustee meetings and made their displeasure at their community's lack of flood protection well known.

The Village established a Flood Liaison Committee composed of residents and staff. They agreed to work together to seek out the best solutions to the flooding problem. The Village asked its consulting engineer to review flood control alternatives, including a levee and a diversion tunnel.

With input from the Flood Liaison Committee, the Village applied to the Community Rating System and became a Class 7. When the engineer's report concluded that no structural flood control project was cost-effective, the Village opted to prepare a comprehensive floodplain management plan following the CRS guidance. The Flood Liaison Committee acted as the planning committee.

The planning process took almost a year, but during that time, Committee members learned about the variety of nonstructural ways to prevent and reduce flood losses. One of the plan's many recommendations was an original and award-winning rebate program to provide financial assistance to property owners for individual flood protection measures. There is now a strong public information element and a permanent “Flood Assistance Coordinator” on the Community Development Department staff.

South Holland is now a CRS Class 5 and enjoys widespread resident support for its floodplain management program. One of the original Flood Liaison Committee members was elected to the Village Board of Trustees and another is on the local Soil and Water Conservation District Board.

Flood Time

“Any great disaster or problem usually produces a by-product called ‘opportunity.’ This is no less true today as we review our policies for managing floodplains.” - Honorable Jim Edgar, Governor of Illinois

Floodplain managers recognize that there is a “window of opportunity” for a few months after a flood or other disaster. Both the public and the media are interested in what happened and what can be done to prepare for the next one. Take advantage of that window before it closes.

1. **Be prepared.** Have pre-printed messages, fact sheets, and handouts ready. They should cover the following messages, which are taken from page 10-13 of *NFIP Floodplain Management Requirements: A Study Guide and Desk Reference*, FEMA 480.

- Take care of oneself (Step 1 in *Repairing Your Flooded Home* (see box)),
- Get a quick inspection by the permit office to determine whether a building is safe to reenter and repair,
- Take the safe, healthy and proper steps to repairing and rebuilding. These are explained in steps 2, 3, and 4 in *Repairing Your Flooded Home*,
- “Returning to normal” means returning to a building that will be damaged by another flood, so include property protection measures as part of repairing homes or businesses,
- Activities that require a permit,
- Activities that do not require a permit,
- The substantial damage rule,
- How Increased Cost of Compliance flood insurance claims work,
- Other sources of financial assistance to mitigate,
- The need for licensed contractors, if licensing is required by the community or the state, and
- Where to get more information, especially from local and disaster-specific offices and websites.

8
STEP

Rebuild and Floodproof

Don't just build it back; build it better. Now is the best possible time to think about floodproofing your home because you can take definite action to protect your property in the future. Many floodproofing measures are quite simple, cost effective, and easy to put in place. By floodproofing as you rebuild, you can make the next flood easier on you and your wallet.

Floodproofing
Floodproofing means to remodel or rebuild using materials and methods that will prevent or minimize damage from future floods. Consider the benefits to floodproofing your home:

- By protecting your home from damage, floodproofing will save you money and aggravation during the next flood.
- Many floodproofing measures are inexpensive.

for the government to act, you can take care of protecting your home when you are ready.

- Floodproofing won't make it possible for you to stay at home in a flood. But it is likely to make it much quicker and easier for you to clean up the next time.

Before you repair or rebuild, the first thing you should do is talk to your town's or city's or county's building department. You will need to ask the following questions:

- What are the procedures for applying for a building permit? What inspections will need to be done?
- Is your home substantially damaged? (Substantially damaged means that the cost to restore your home to its "before damaged" condition would equal or

Excerpt from *Repairing Your Flooded Home*. FEMA or the Red Cross can supply large numbers of this publication which provides step by step guidance on what to do after a flood. It is made to be photocopied easily and it can be put on a website.

2. **Help people.** It should go without saying that helping flood victims is a key way to build public support. Remember that state and federal disaster response and assistance programs may not be (1) easy to understand or (2) available to everyone. You can help by offering a place for a disaster assistance center, explaining the assistance programs, and providing the letters needed to trigger an Increased Cost of Compliance claim payment.

3. **Coordinate the message.** Make sure the Mayor is not telling everyone to go back and rebuild as quickly as possible while you need to remind people to get a permit and incorporate flood protection measures as part of reconstruction. Talk to the public information office and the emergency manager who are talking to the media and providing background information to the elected officials. Monitor the reports and articles and send corrections when needed. (If you've built a relationship with the mayor based on the good practices in this guide, it will be much easier to ensure that your message is consistent.)
4. **Take advantage of the event.** As noted in General Principle #10, now is the time to explain your program and how it made a difference.
 - Collect and summarize the statistics on the flood. Clarify the causes and whether recent construction had an impact.
 - Write a summary of what did and did not happen and contribute to your local government's after-action evaluation.
 - Identify some properties that did not get damaged thanks to your regulations or mitigation work.
 - Arrange for tours of the sites and interviews of the owners or residents.
 - Organize a post-flood committee to guide recovery and redevelopment policies and to help identify mitigation opportunities (see "How They Did It: Rebuilding Resident Confidence" on page 27).



How They Did It: Enforcing the Substantial Damage Rules

Floods in July 2007, damaged 700 homes in the City of Miami and Ottawa County, Oklahoma. In the past, local officials had allowed flood victims to rebuild as soon as possible, without regard for their own adopted floodplain management requirements for damaged buildings. This time, however, a new slate of officials had a different idea about rebuilding after a flood. At a large public meeting, State staff explained the rules, using the following guidelines:

- Give people a simplified summary of the situation and the regulations.
- Explain that instead of helping their fellow citizens, local officials and staff who ignore regulations and allow people to rebuild in the same old floodprone way are helping to create a time bomb of flood damage misery for those residents and future generations.
- Explain how the community will be at risk losing eligibility to participate in the National Flood Insurance Program if it does not fully enforce its regulations. Note that if it is suspended from the NFIP, it will make flood insurance and some types of disaster assistance unavailable.
- Note that any municipality or individual who fails to enforce regulations risks individual and even personal liability if flood damage occurs in the future.
- Show how a "patchwork quilt" approach to funding would be an appropriate and beneficial way to rebuild the flooded area safely and properly without undue hardship on the residents.

The former State NFIP Coordinator noted that this approach was "overwhelmingly convincing." The City and County were convinced to enforce their floodplain regulations and the public understood why.

— From ASFPM News & Views, August 2007

What Next?

This guide introduced you to a variety of ways to build public support. Some will work better in some situations and some will fit your personality better.

- Be flexible and take advantage of initiatives,
- Use those approaches that work best for you, and
- If you're in a heated discussion, remember the four-point consent-building method.

The important thing is to keep in mind that you need the public's support and that there are things you can do to get it.

