

MPA Tip: Making technical language accessible for public planning processes

"MPA Tip" is a recurring feature that presents advice for MPA planning and management from practitioners and publications. Below are suggestions for resource managers on how to communicate technical information effectively to the public, such as during MPA planning processes that involve stakeholders. The advice is from the draft *Handbook on Public Participation in International Waters Management*, being produced by the International Waters Learning Exchange and Resource Network (IW:LEARN). The draft publication is available in Word format at www.iwlearn.net/abt_iwlearn/events/p2/p2-handbook.en.

Tip: It is important to communicate with the public in terms that they understand. To make technical language accessible, use the following checklist:

- Use examples and analogies;
- Use vocabulary familiar to the target audience;
- Clearly state why the information is relevant to the target audience;
- Use visuals;
- Use short sentences;
- Avoid jargon and acronyms. When they must be used, define them in simple language;
- Use language similar to what you would in a conversation with stakeholders; and
- Do not "dumb down" the language. The purpose of creating accessible information is to educate and inform, not to disadvantage stakeholders with oversimplified versions of concepts that are inherently complex.

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