

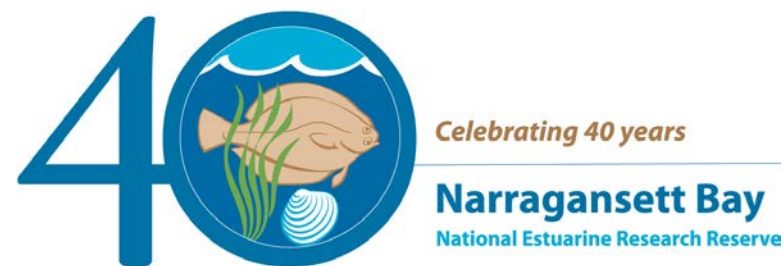
How to Talk about Climate Change (even during a pandemic)

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NNOCCI National Network for Ocean and
Climate Change Interpretation

Outline

- Why we need talk about climate change (and tell a different story)
- Intro to NNOCCI & strategic framing
- Elements of the story we need to tell
- How to stay connected



Effective climate action requires productive public dialogue and civic engagement

- 70% of Americans think climate change is happening now
- Yet, 65% of Americans discuss climate change only occasionally or never

Climate change in the American mind: March 2018. Yale University and George Mason University. New Haven, CT: Yale Program on Climate Change Communication.



Hope promotes dialogue & action

Hopeful Americans are
more likely to...

- discuss global warming with their friends and family
- support regulating CO2
- say they will act

Public dialogue...

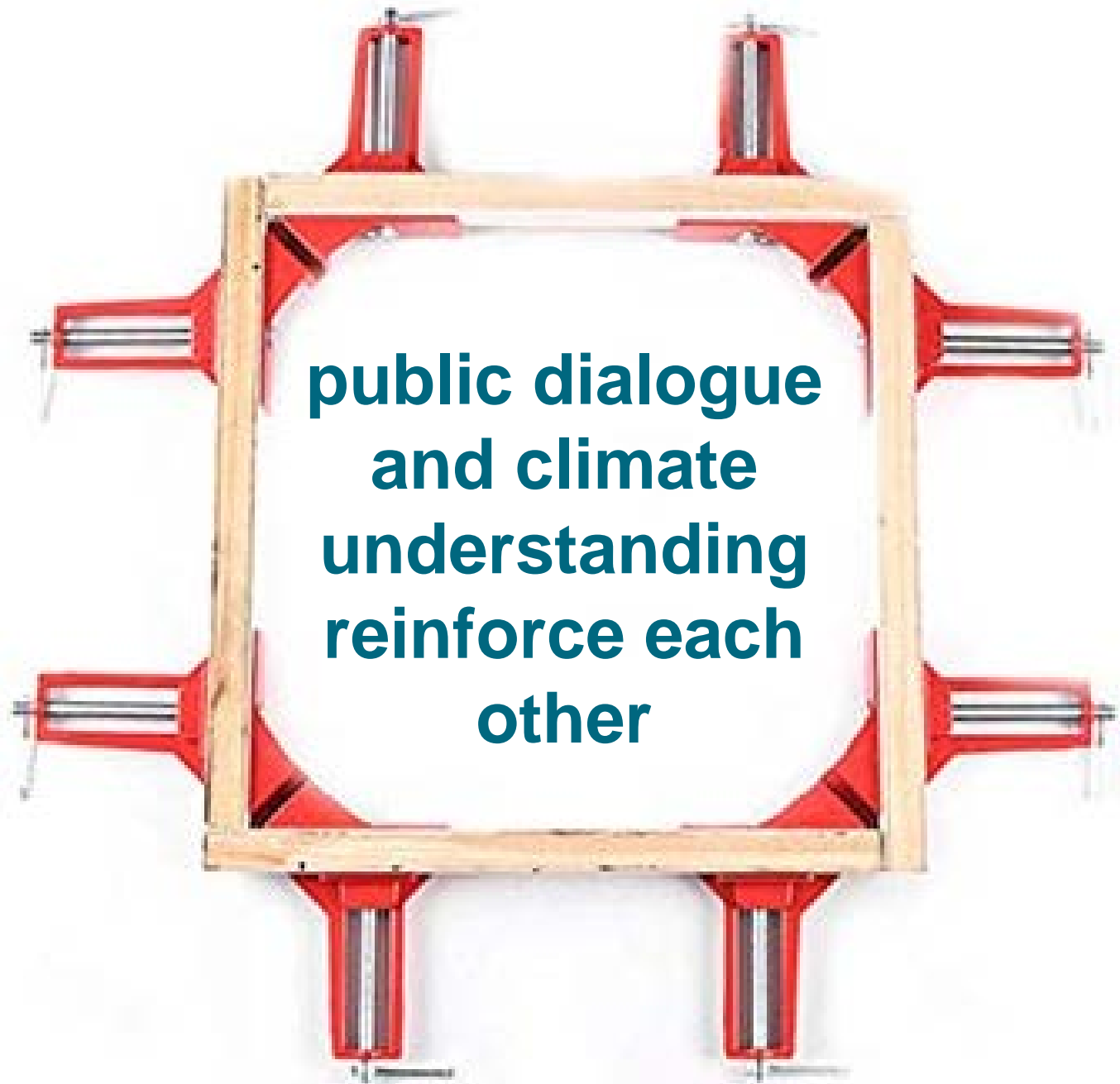


...motivates action

...builds social cohesion

Ballew, M. T., Leiserowitz, A., Roser-Renouf, C., Rosenthal, S. A., Kotcher, J. E., Marlon, J. R., Lyon, E., Goldberg, M. H., & Maibach, E. W. (2019). Climate Change in the American Mind: Data, tools, and trends. *Environment: Science and Policy for Sustainable Development*, 61(3), 4-18.

Clayton, S., Manning, C. M., Krygsman, K., & Speiser, M. (2017). *Mental Health and Our Changing Climate: Impacts, Implications, and Guidance*. Washington, D.C.: American Psychological Association, and ecoAmerica.



**public dialogue
and climate
understanding
reinforce each
other**

Specific audiences...



- Latinos tend to have higher perceptions of risk and social norms that favor climate action
- Children can influence their parents
- Hearing about climate change from family and friends is particularly influential for conservatives

Ballew MT, Goldberg MH, Rosenthal SA, Cutler MJ and Leiserowitz A (2019) Climate Change Activism Among Latino and White Americans. *Front. Commun.* 3:58.

Lawson DF, Stevenson KT, Peterson MN, Carrier SJ, Strnad RL, Seekamp E (2019) Children can foster climate change concern among their parents. *Nature Climate Change* 9, 458–462.

Goldberg MH, van der Linden S, Leiserowitz A, Maibach E (2019) Perceived social consensus can reduce ideological biases on climate change. *Environment and Behavior*, doi: 10.1177/0013916519853302

Climate change and the 2020 election



- 38% of registered voters say that a candidate's position will be important in their voting decision
- Yet, only 11% have contacted an elected official to urge them to take action

The NNOCCI Story

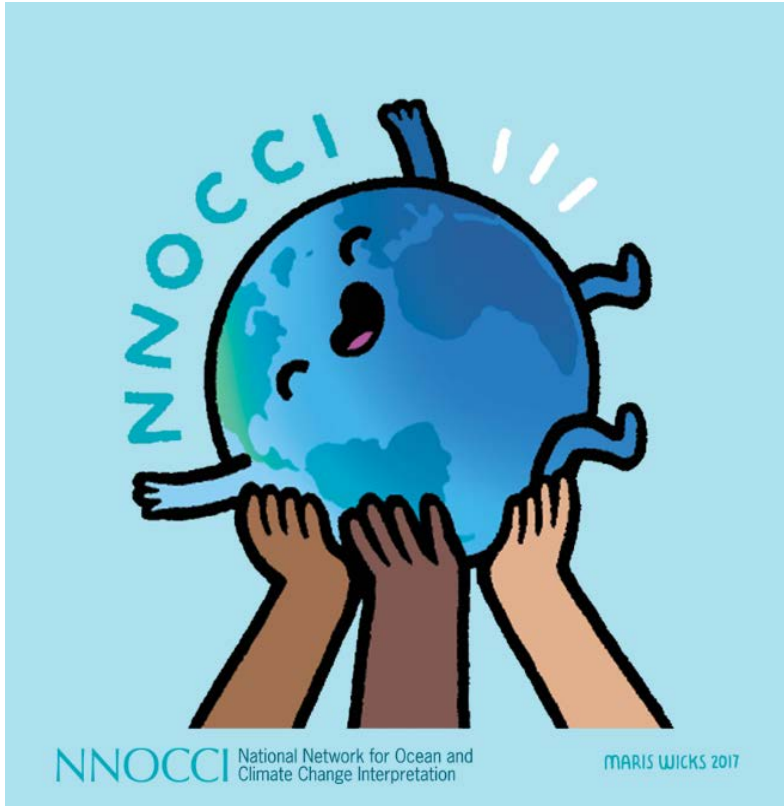
Constructive Dialog about Climate Change



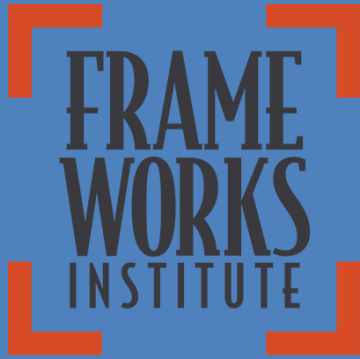
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Our mission



Together we can train enough voices in proven communication techniques to shift the national conversation about climate change to be more positive, civic-minded and solutions-focused.



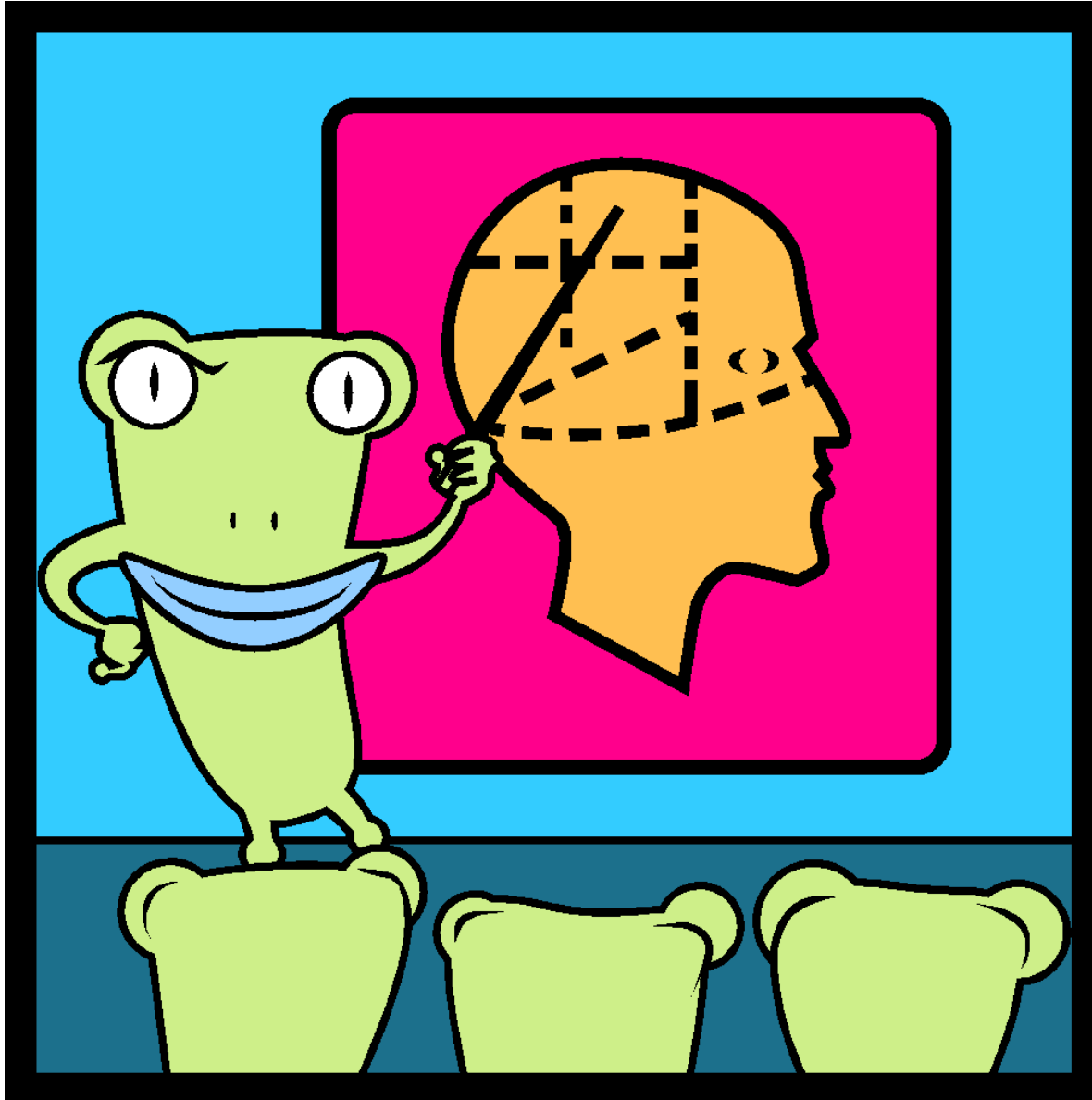
mission

Recommendations for maximizing the positive impact of climate communications within a COVID-19 context.

mission

**Take time to survey the landscape, so
you can navigate thoughtfully.**

Where do we start?



Knowing how people think helps us construct and deliver our messages for highest impact.

What trends do you notice in these pictures? Please add to the chat box.



Page 2



Let's see what this looks like on the street...



Default thinking about CO₂

Ocean

- Ocean supports humans
- Ocean as resource
- Basis of life
- Ocean and land = separate worlds
- Ocean is vast; Drop in the bucket
- Heal themselves
- All on the surface
- Ocean acidification - what's that?
- Ocean is too big to harm



Science

- Science is innovation
- How do scientists know that?
- New study every week
- My observation is as good as yours

Consumerism

- Ecosystems are valuable resources
- Cost/benefit thinking
- Eat it while you can!
- Bottomless grocery store
- Jobs vs. environment

Pollution

- Human caused
- Ocean problems = material pollution
- The root of all environment problems
- Just clean it up
- Solution = Recycling
- Carbon dioxide = carbon monoxide



What's in the Swamp of...
Ocean and Climate Change

Nature

- Web of life/It's all connected
- Shared fate
- Nature works in cycles
- Nature is self-correcting
- Change is natural/Fatalism
- Mother nature
- CO₂ is natural, therefore it is good

Climate Change

- Something needs to be done
- Climate change = warming
- Melting ice
- What can I really do?
- Climate=yearly weather patterns in place
- "It's about the ozone, isn't it?"
- Big, Scary depressing
- System, what system?

Public Affairs

- Americans are problem solvers
- Civic Responsibility
- Government is good at protection
- Two sides to every story
- Even if we do our part, other countries won't
- Politics as usual
- Individualism

Consumerism

- Ecosystems are valuable resources
- Profit thinking
- ...

Pollution

- Human caused
- Ocean problems = material pollution
- The root of all environmental ...

Be careful not to pit the climate crisis against the COVID crisis.

mother nature

- CO₂ is natural, therefore it is good

- Big, Small
- System, what's ...



Consumerism

- Ecosystems are valuable resources
- Profit thinking
- ...

Pollution

- Human caused
- Ocean problems = material pollution
- The root of all environment...

Make a powerful case for public institutions- and avoid demonizing the government.

mother nature

- CO₂ is natural, therefore it is good

- Big, Small
- System, what's...



Strategic Framing is...

A research-based approach that is proven to:

- **bridge the gap** between scientist and public understanding
- help the **public understand the mechanisms** of climate change
- give the public a **sense of hope**

The Core Story of Ocean & Climate Change

Why does this matter to society?

How does it work?

How do we improve the situation?

(and avoid a **crisis** tone)

Story of Ocean Change

Balance urgency with efficacy.

(and avoid a **CL**)

Our Toolbox

Why Does This Matter to Society?

How Does it Work?

How Do We Improve the Situation?



Responsible Management



Regular & Rampant CO₂



Heat-trapping Blanket



Osteoporosis of the Sea



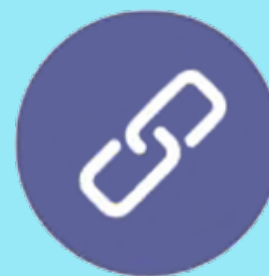
Community-level Solutions



Protection



Climate's Heart



Explanatory Chains

The Core Story of Ocean & Climate Change

Why does this matter to society?

Values

How does it work?

How do we improve the situation?

Why Does This Matter to Society?





Value

Protection

Why does it matter? What's at stake?



The story you're telling:

We must protect people and places from being harmed by the issues facing our environment.



Strategically redirects thinking away from patterns such as:

- Bottomless Grocery Store • Change Is Natural/Fatalism • Individualism
- Nature Will Fix Itself • Nature Works in Cycles • Solution = Recycling



Value

Responsible Management

Why does it matter? What's at stake?



The story you're telling:

Taking practical, common sense steps to address problems facing our environment today is in the best interest of future generations.



Strategically redirects thinking away from patterns such as:

- Change Is Natural/Fatalism • Eat It While You Can • Individualism
- Nature Will Fix Itself • Nature Works In Cycles • Solution = Recycling

Values may be raised many ways...



- Use synonyms
- Think about explicit vs. implicit references
- Use idioms that appeal to the value
- Reinforce the value through word choice
- Reinforce or illustrate the value through images

raised many ways...

**Show how this moment highlights our
connections with each other and the
natural world.**



The core story of ocean & climate change

Why does this matter to society?

Values

How does it work?

Explanatory Chains and Metaphors

How do we improve the situation?

The guessing machine has consequences...



How does it work? (let's revisit our toolbox)

Why Does This Matter to Society?

How Does it Work?

How Do We Improve the Situation?



Responsible Management



Protection



Regular & Rampant CO₂



Heat-trapping Blanket



Osteoporosis of the Sea



Climate's Heart



Explanatory Chains



Community-level Solutions



Explanatory Metaphor

Regular and Rampant CO₂

A metaphor for anthropogenic carbon dioxide



The story you're telling:

"Regular" carbon dioxide is used and created by normal life processes, but "rampant" levels of carbon dioxide come from burning fossil fuels for energy. We need to reduce rampant CO₂. It's getting out of control.



Logically redirects thinking away from patterns such as:

CO₂ Is Natural Therefore It Is Good · Carbon Dioxide = Carbon Monoxide
Ocean Problems = Material Pollution · Nature Will Fix Itself · Solution = Recycling
· Change Is Natural/Fatalism · It's the Ozone, Right?



Explanatory Metaphor

Osteoporosis of the Sea

A metaphor for some of the effects of ocean acidification



The story you're telling:

Ocean acidification is a change in the chemistry of the ocean and causes "osteoporosis of the sea," which prevents animals at the bottom of the food web from building and maintaining the protective shells they need to survive.



Logically redirects thinking away from patterns such as:

Nature Will Fix Itself · Nature Works In Cycles · Ocean Acidification—What's That?
Ocean Is Too Big to Be Harmed · Ocean Problems = Material Pollution



Explanatory Metaphor

Climate's Heart

A metaphor for the role of the ocean in the climate system



The story you're telling:

The heart circulates blood and regulates the body's temperature, the ocean circulates heat and moisture throughout the climate system.



Logically redirects thinking away from patterns such as:

Natural/Fatalism · Climate = Weather · Climate System? What System?
Nature Will Heal Itself · Ocean and Land = Separate Worlds
Ocean Is Too Big to be Harmed · Ocean Problems = Material Pollution
· Science Is Uncertain



Explanatory Metaphor

Heat-Trapping Blanket

A metaphor for the basic mechanism of climate change



The story you're telling:

When we burn fossil fuels for energy, we add more and more carbon dioxide into the air. This buildup acts like a blanket that traps heat around the world, which disrupts the climate.



Logically redirects thinking away from patterns such as:

Change Is Natural/Fatalism · It's About the Ozone, Isn't It? · Nature Will Fix Itself
· Nature Works In Cycles · Solution = Recycling

One or two quick questions?

The core story of ocean & climate change

Why does this matter to society?

Values

How does it work?

Explanatory Chains and Metaphors

How do we improve the situation?

Community-level Solutions

Back to our toolbox...

Why Does This Matter to Society?

How Does it Work?

How Do We Improve the Situation?



Responsible Management



Regular & Rampant CO₂



Heat-trapping Blanket



Osteoporosis of the Sea



Protection



Climate's Heart



Explanatory Chains



Community-level Solutions



Frame Element

Solutions

The Solutions frame element fosters hope and instills a sense of agency and efficacy.



The story you're telling:

Concern for our climate is normal and action on climate is happening all around us. We can come together as citizens to address climate change and help change the decision-making context so that the sustainable choice is the easy choice for more Americans.



Strategically redirects thinking away from patterns such as:

- Even if we do our part, other countries won't • Big, Scary, Depressing • Crisis
- Change is natural / Fatalism • Just clean it up • Nature is self-correcting
- Solution = Recycling

Be specific

- Concrete examples help show that change is possible
- Be explicit about how people can work together to push the solution forward

Reinforce with other frame elements

- Cue the *Responsible Management* or *Protection* value to remind people why the action matters
- Explain how the solution helps reduce CO2 emissions.

We're all in this together

- Reinforce that concern for our climate is normal
- Invite people to talk to others
- Avoid polarizing language

Avoiding Polarizing The Solution

In 2016 and 2017, FrameWorks conducted a study of **4500** individuals, looking at how framing *Solutions* can help you avoid swampy thinking.

Solutions themselves have the ability to be polarizing.

Cues to use with caution:

Politicians
Policies
Laws
Regulations
Government

Use instead:

Civic leaders
Approaches
Programs
State or City Name
Municipal



Reinforcing a solution with a value and explanation also helps you steer clear of the swamp.

Example:

“I’m curious about community gardens. There are a lot of abandoned lots in my neighborhood.”

Explains how they help reduce CO₂

“Yes, community gardens help because they **reduce the CO₂ emitted when transporting vegetables to your grocery store**. They are also great at helping us adapt to the intense rain storms we are getting as an effect of climate change **by absorbing the stormwater**. And they are **great places for the community to come together**. I bet you are not the only person in your neighborhood that is concerned with the abandoned lots. I would start talking to your neighbors to see who else is interested. **The Belle Isle Salt Marsh in East Boston was restored because neighbors in the area wanted to keep that area for recreational uses and came together to make sure that it happened.**”

Co-benefits

Concrete example

Solutions – “Me” to “We”

	Community (neighborhoods, schools, institutions, workplaces, public spaces)	City	State/Region
Energy			
Transportation			
Food & Landscaping			
Homes & Buildings			
Manufacturing Products & Services			
Waste			

“Me” to “We”

Align efforts to address COVID-19 with efforts to tackle climate change.

Manufacturing Products
& Services

Waste

Putting it all together

Why does this matter to society?

Values (Protection and Responsible Management)

How does it work?

Explanatory Metaphors (Heat Trapping Blanket, etc.)

How do we improve the situation?

Community-level Solutions

It all together

Frame the future.

HOW

Community-10

Stay connected



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MARIS WICKS 2017

- www.nnocci.org
- Set up a **profile** on www.ClimateInterpreter.org
- Try our **Free Online Course**: <https://tinyurl.com/NNOCCIfree>
- Follow us on **Facebook & Twitter** (@_NNOCCI)
- jennifer.west@dem.ri.gov

Questions?



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MARIS WICKS 2017

Thank you and happy framing!