

# 12 Suggestions for Communicating the Value of Nature's Benefits

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## Considerations

- Widespread polling suggests that the loss of the world's biological resources is still not considered a pressing issue.
- We are dealing with a society that has a limited understanding of nature and little (if any) direct contact with the natural world.
- Effectively communicating the value of nature's benefits, a.k.a. ecosystem services, natural capital, might help increase the public's awareness of the importance of Ontario's biodiversity.

## Suggestions

- **Use the message that best fits the audience's interests.**
  - The health benefits or the social significance or the cultural importance or the economic value may be more influential with individual audiences.
- **Highlight the under-appreciated services that natural systems provide.**
  - The majority of people are still fascinated by the “wonders” of the natural world.
- **More often than not, focus beyond the monetary value of ecosystem services.**
  - Using only the ‘valuation’ of ecosystem services (the ‘big’ dollar value) can diminish the overall ‘value’ of the services. Use valuation in decision-making, where appropriate, but don’t make it the basis of communication efforts.

## Suggestions

- **Build the messages on good science.**
  - Find the amateur “geek” in everyone, but don't get bogged down with too much data or detail.
- **Tell a compelling story.**
  - A honest narrative is often more persuasive than a collection of “facts & figures”.
- **Always use ‘clear’ language.**
  - Use language the particular audience understands, without “dumbing down” the message.

## Suggestions

- **Give them a reason to care! People will protect what they care about.**
  - Make the connection for people between their everyday lives and the ecosystem services on which they depend.
- **Motivate the audience to take personal and political action.**
  - Provide real options and some practical *'Things You Can Do'*.
- **Highlight the positive impact that actions taken by individuals have had on the natural environment.**
  - People need to believe that their actions will make a difference.

## Suggestions

- **Be explicit - some ecosystem services are ‘priceless’ because they are irreplaceable.**
  - In a positive tone, emphasize that we need to protect what we’ve got before it’s gone.
- **Avoid “doom & gloom”.**
  - Pollsters have found that messages of innovation and hope resonate best with most audiences.
- **Repeat the message. Repeat the message.**
  - Everybody benefits from hearing information more than once, and as often as possible.