



**NOAA
FISHERIES**

Building Relationships for Effective EFH Consultations

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What is an EFH Consultation?

EFH Consultation = Advice to Action Agency

EFH Consultation ≠ Prescription or Imposition



What is Advice?

Advice is guidance or recommendations concerning prudent future action, typically given by someone regarded as knowledgeable or authoritative (*Oxford Dictionary*)

* In order to be regarded as knowledgeable or authoritative, you must first build a relationship with somebody.



Why are relationships important?

- It is typically the relationship between NOAA staff and staff of federal action agencies that is the foundation of successful consultations
- It is not enough to just be a NOAA Habitat Specialist, you need to prove to the action agency that you are indeed an expert as well as earn their trust



What are the results of positive relationships with action agencies?

- When we have good relationships with action agencies, our habitat advice is generally more accepted and implemented.



7 Keys to build and maintain positive relationships with action agencies *(source: various)*

- Communicate
- Take an interest/ understand their needs
- Develop mutual respect
- Be mindful
- Solve problems
- Eliminate surprises
- Be honest and trustworthy



Steps we take to build positive relationships

- Understand the goals of the action agency. Our goals may differ but do not have to be mutually exclusive
- Make phone calls instead of emails – 1 call may avoid 10 emails. It creates a more personal relationship.
- Insure that the best available science is being used to support our advice and recognize its limitations
- Be reasonable in your approach. Don't request more than what is needed
- No surprises. Give the action agency a heads-up about “bad news.” They should not be blindsided by a letter.
- Keep it civil. Nobody like a bully!



Conclusion

- Building positive relationships is a strength of HCD staff. It is not always easy to do but it is necessary.
- Staff that build positive relationships have far better success in getting coastal development projects revised or BMPs implemented to minimize impacts of those projects.

Positive Relationships = Improved Habitat Conservation





THANK YOU!!

