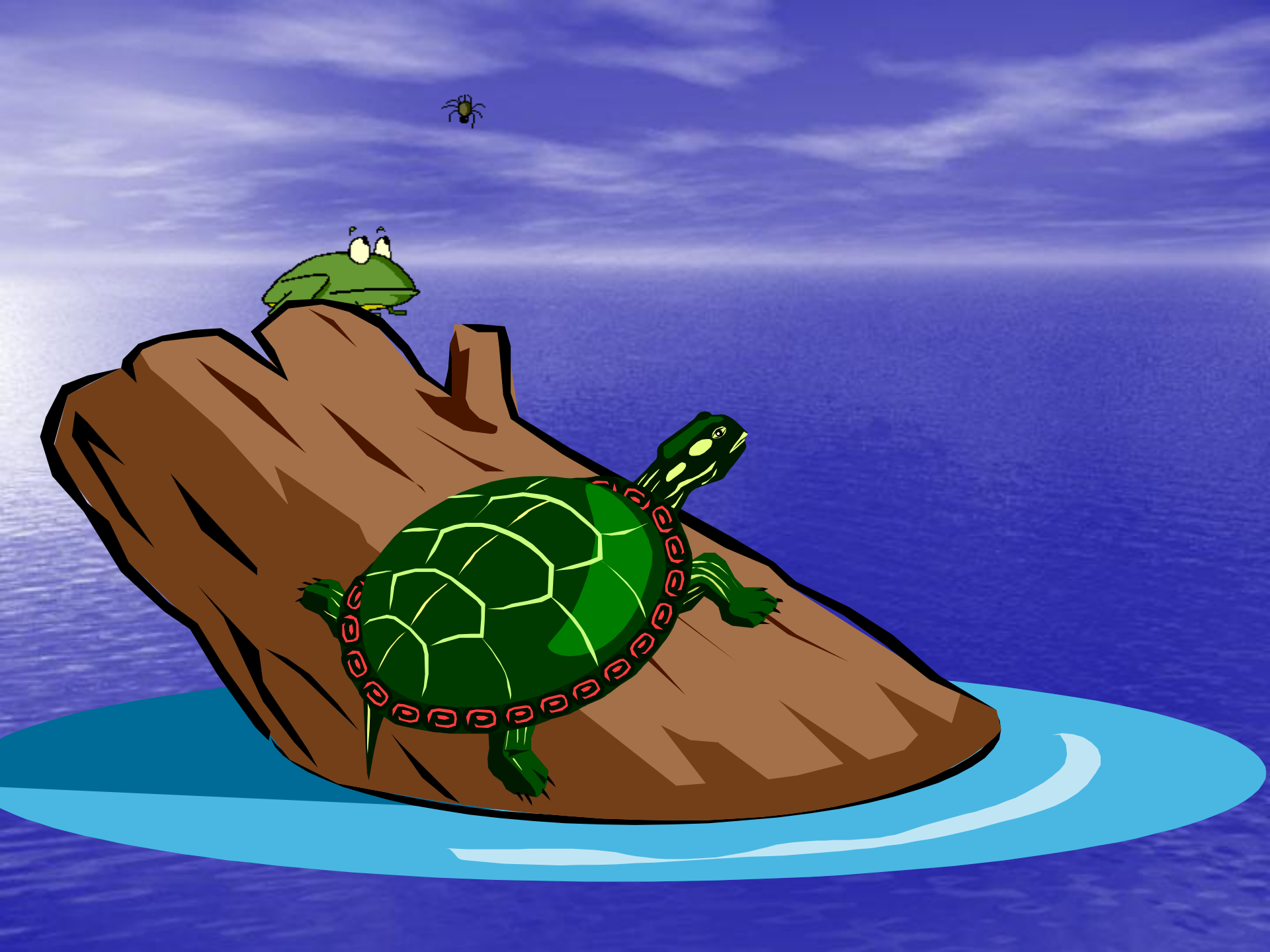


Framing the Message

The use of value-based language
to engage the public in lake
management

Rob McLennan
Wisconsin DNR





What is a Frame ?

- A frame is the context in which an issue is discussed.
- A frame is defined by the words and language used to talk about an issue.
- The language used leads people to think about an issue in a specific way.



“When Americans think about environmentalism [lake management]...., research shows, they all too often think: elitist; anti-jobs, anti-business, anti-technology; more concerned with critters than people; willing, for instance to sacrifice loggers and their families for the sake of owls [or sacrifice a dream home and manicured shoreline for the sake of a few frogs and turtles]. They are considered extremist "doom and gloomers" who oppose progress and prosperity...”

"... many environmental messages fall into the trap of actively reinforcing the frame that [environmental protection] equals decline".

-Alex Steffen, 2004



Lake management tools can be perceived as unreasonable burdens that prevent people and businesses from maximizing self interest and profit

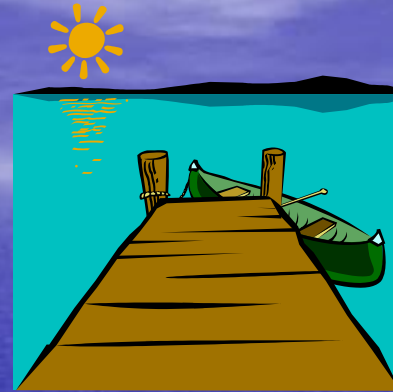
Nothing should impinge on personal freedoms



Agricultural Performance Standards

Zoning & Planning

Pier Regulations



Aquatic Plant Management Regulations

Lawn Fertilizer Controls

Shoreland Buffers

Stormwater Management



Why do we need to frame Lake management messages?

We need to create a setting where:

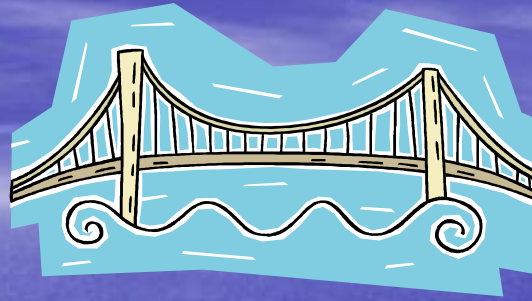
- **Habitat Protection & Management**
- **Exotic Species prevention and control**
- **Watershed Management**
- **Water Quality Regulations, &**
- **Wise Shoreland Management**

=

***Community prosperity
Enhanced personal gratification &
A bright economic future***



**Unnecessary
Burden /
Assault on
Personal
Freedom**



**Path to
Personal
Satisfaction
and
Community
Prosperity**

**Need to understand the role
of language & values.....**

Example 1: Tax Relief.....Not Tax Cuts or Tax Reduction

(George Lakoff, 2004)

- Implies an unnecessary burden or affliction
- It makes taxpayers victims in need of rescue
- Those who would relieve the affliction are seen as heroes
- Those who oppose giving relief are therefore, villains



Reframe:

- Taxes pay for our roads, interstates, water supply, sewage treatment, schools, national defense, homeland security, etc.
- They are investments in the future. We benefit now from the taxes paid by others last year and over the last decades
- Taxes support the common good and should be fairly apportioned
- Patriotic Americans pay their fair share to maintain our way of life and to protect our individual, community, and national security
- Taxes are essential to preserve the American way of life



Example 2: Water Level Management

Original Frame:

Boaters need deeper water in order to fully enjoy their sport.

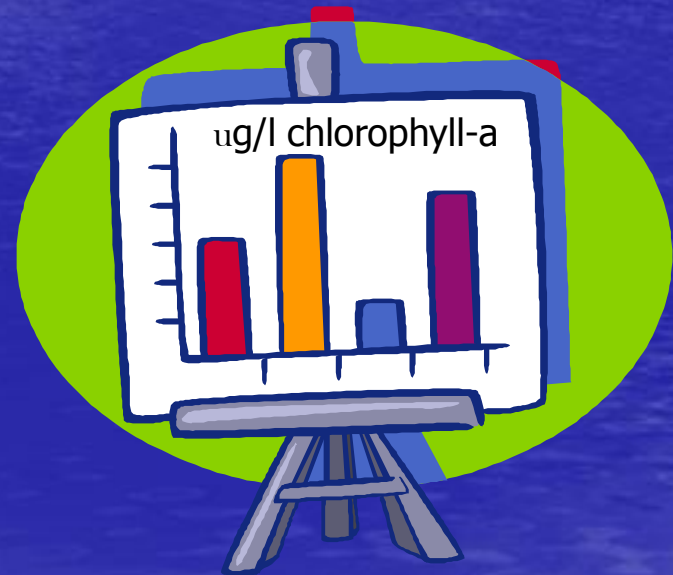


Property values will decline if water levels don't meet boater expectations.

The economy will suffer; people will move away and marinas will close if water levels don't meet boater desires.

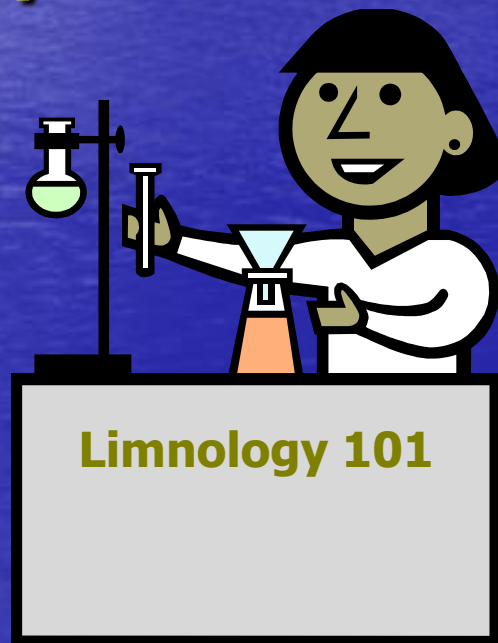
Traditional Lake Manager Response

- Talk about the benefit to macrophytes in the littoral zone
- Habitat for amphibians and centrarchids
- Vallisneria, Scirpus & Potamogeton
- Milligrams of this
- Micrograms of that
- Eutrophication
- TSI numbers
- Charts and graphs



- Reality Check.....

Scientific facts will rarely
trump
a carefully conceived frame



Effective Frames or Re-frames focus on values:

Community

- **Fairness**
- **Responsibility**
- **Unity**
- **Prosperity**
- **Progress**
- **Cooperation**
- **Balance**
- **Justice**
- **Accountability**
- **Health, Safety, and Security**

Personal

- **Tranquility**
- **Serenity**
- **Healthy relationships**
- **Harmony**
- **Economic security**
- **Satisfaction**
- **Family time**
- **Relaxation**
- **Recreation**
- **Privacy**

Re-framing Water Levels & Boating

- It's not fair for a few people to get their way when it hurts what the rest of us value; clean water & a healthy fishery.
- Our families, particularly our children, deserve to have a clean, healthy lake to enjoy.
- We all have a responsibility to support what is right for clean water, fish, & wildlife.
- Clean water & a healthy fishery increases property values, creates jobs, and supports the local economy.
- We need to invest in the health of our lakes.
- Balanced and fair water level management is right for our community.

Obvious Conclusions.....!



A small segment of the boating community wants us to gamble with the character and economic stability of our lake community by putting clean water, fish, and wildlife at risk.

These people want to exploit the lakes to satisfy their own personal recreational desires.

Their desires run counter to widely held community values and are therefore, unreasonable.

Re-Framing is not deceptive.

- It is not spin
- It is not propaganda
- It simply means telling the truth from a different, values-based perspective



Key Points:



- Framing of lakes issues will be more effective if other messages are framed in a similar manner
- When the media and public adopt re-framed terminology, we're well on our way to changing minds and policies

Example 3: Long Lake Management Plan; A Logical Approach

- Who are the key audiences ?
- What are their values ?
- Match value-based messages to each audience.



Goal 1. Protect water clarity; prevent algae blooms; reduce nutrient levels in the lake



Families and individuals, particularly our children, deserve to have a lake with clean water to use and enjoy. Protecting water quality will be achieved by reducing the spring turnover total phosphorus concentration to 16-18 ug/l and summer surface total phosphorus concentration to 14-15 ug/l.....Reducing the total phosphorus concentration will require reducing the controllable inputs of phosphorus to the lake by 50 to 90 percent and minimizing inputs of future sources of phosphorus.

Goal 2. Protect and restore healthy, stable shoreland habitats



Restoring and protecting shorelands will provide privacy and tranquility as well as a natural space for families to enjoy nature. Several of the existing developed shorelands lack adequate natural buffers which provide critical habitat and protect water quality. Restored and properly maintained shoreland buffers will provide water quality protection and provide critical habitat areas for water dependent wildlife and aquatic life.

Goal 3. Protect and improve diverse aquatic life, including the fishery and aquatic plant community



Leaving fallen trees in the water and protecting high quality aquatic plants will improve fishing for anglers and many generations of future anglers. Healthy lake ecosystems are valuable natural resources for shoreland property owners and all lake users. Fish populations will be protected and improved by maintaining good water quality conditions, improving inlake habitat conditions, protecting high quality aquatic plant populations and managing angler harvest. It is critical to protect existing high quality inlake habitats for fish and aquatic life as well as restore degraded habitat areas.

Points to Remember:

- A frame is the context in which an issue is discussed
- A frame is defined by the words and language used to talk about an issue
- The language used leads people to think about an issue in a specific way
- Effective frames focus on personal and community values





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