BUILDING COMMUNICATION FRAMEWORKS: HOW COMMUNICATION ADAPTABILITY ENGAGES OUR COMMUNITIES
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Lianna Rzajeva*, @LRzajeva, Program on the Environment, University of Washington
Site Supervisor: Michelle Mullin, United States Environmental Protection Agency, Region 10
Faculty Advisor: Todd Wildermuth, School of Law, University of Washington

The last twenty years have witnessed a boom in strategic communication framing on a federal scale that has shifted away from traditional practices and have emphasized the need for greater public engagement through a community-oriented lens. While these enhanced protocols have been adopted on the regional level, there exists the need to assess the viability of current strategies and determine their effectiveness behind incorporating public input. My internship with EPA Region 10 was an opportunity to see first-hand how community outreach protocols are materialized by their employees. I collected data through interviews with both EPA-affiliates as well as with local community group members, and in addition synthesized pre-existing research surrounding adaptative communication strategies. Through intensive data collection, I found that the use of third-party brokers was the most cited tool for engagement by both the EPA as well as community group members. Other outreach methods were noted as instrumental to fulfilling communication objectives, such as encouraging community capacity building and detailing the need for research translation. These strategies were highlighted for their ability in adaptively meeting outreach objectives while existing within the presented framework. Additionally, historical legacies surrounding trust was a distinguishable barrier to direct communication flows between both parties. In regard to the existing limitations of federal partnerships, a potential market exists to bolster the effectiveness of third-party brokerages and their role in upholding the informational channels between federal agencies and their community stakeholders.