



# An Analysis of the Use of Environmental Scientific Information in Policy and Decision Making



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## Abstract

How does environmental scientific information influence public policy and decision making? This topic warrants major interest. Finding solutions to important issues concerning the sustainability of local and global eco-systems necessitates swift action based on sound science. An analysis of relevant literature confirmed that scientific information is not typically conveyed or utilized in an efficient manner in policy decisions. This poster identifies key barriers and recommends strategies for libraries to increase the efficient use of scientific information in policy and decision making.

## Problem & Guiding Questions

*“Climate change presents very serious global risks, and it demands an urgent response.” ~ Stern Review*

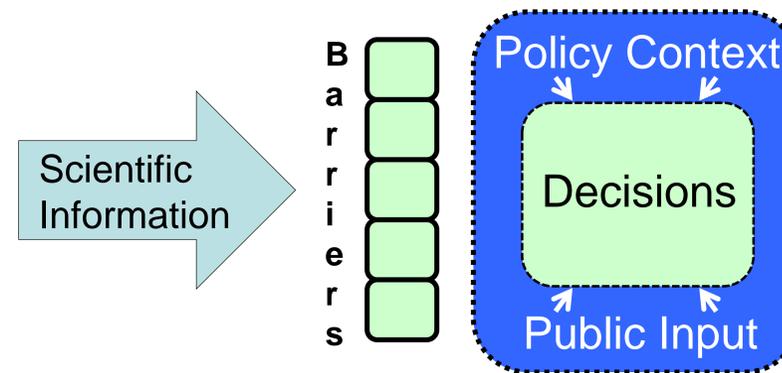
### Guiding Questions

- How is environmental scientific information used in decisions regarding local and global environmental risks?
- What barriers inhibit effective environmental decision making?
- How can libraries mitigate barriers to efficient policy and decision making?

## Stakeholders & Information Flow

Policy and decision making involves multiple stakeholders, including:

- Scientists
- Bureaucrats / Civil Servants
- General Public



## How Can Libraries Mitigate These Barriers?

- Be aware of barriers to communication and effective decision making.
- Offer comprehensive access to reports and publications with the expectation that stakeholders will find understandable information.
- Encourage patrons to move beyond quick searches towards approaches that lead to thorough understanding of topics.
- Be proactive in developing and promoting digital access to the best available science, e.g., via institutional repositories, implementing appropriate and effective metadata to highlight well considered sources, etc.
- Address political accountability in the following ways:
  - assist patrons in demystifying the policy and decision making processes by highlighting participation opportunities.
  - maintain a stance of neutrality on debatable issues so that credibility of service is maintained.
- Illustrating the uncertainties of what constitutes the “best available science” will assist patrons in understanding the uncertainties of scientific findings (which are often presented as high probabilities, not certainties) and sensitivities regarding BAS in particular instances.

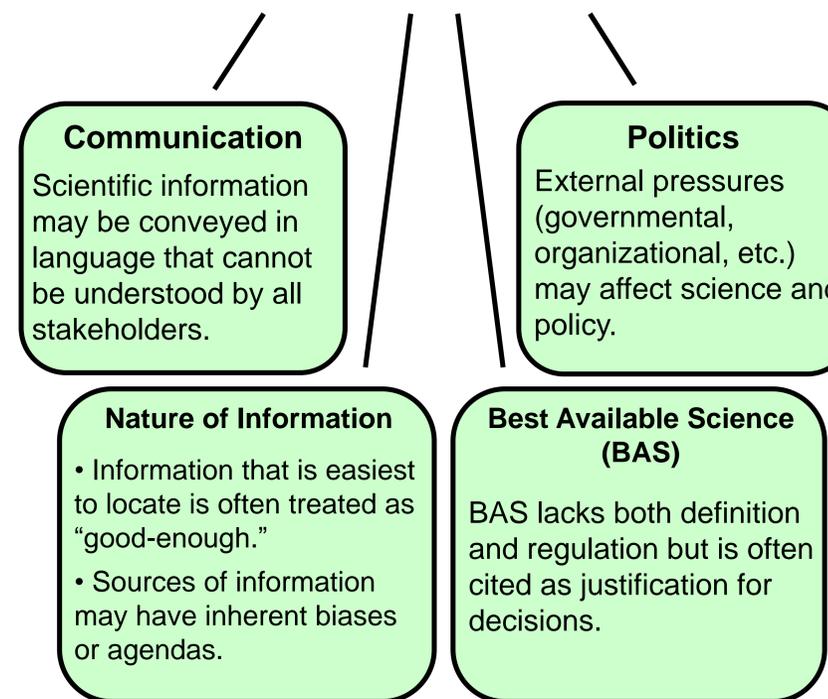


## Scientific Information

*“The use of science in environmental policy is a primary goal of resource management and conservation that is relevant to issues at global, national, and local scales.” ~ Francis et al.*

- Governments support research which generates environmental information.
- Government departments and agencies (e.g., Environment Canada) generate research for policy makers.
- Bodies such as the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), created in part by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), seek to provide policy makers with “objective source(s) of information about the causes of climate change, its potential environmental and socio-economic consequences and the adaptation and mitigation options to respond to it.” ~ IPCC (<http://www.ipcc.ch/about/index.htm>).

## What Barriers Exist Within This Information Setting?



## Key References

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