

There's a time to talk shop. There's a time to preach to the choir. At other times...

AVOID THESE WORDS

Words That Don't Work

Here is a good definition of the phrase “shop talk.”

[“Talk about your business that only others in the same business can understand”](#)

And here are some examples of nature protection and pollution control “shop talk.” The more you use them, the more people you will exclude from the conversation. Click the link for citations on the shortcomings of these terms.

Words With Documented Shortcomings

Term	Issue	Try Substituting...
Alternative Energy	<u>Alternatives are what you get when you don't get your first choice</u>	Clean and safe energy
Biodiversity	<u>Many don't understand this term</u>	Extinction, wildlife
Climate change	<u>Seems mild, potentially pleasant</u>	Global warming
Conservation easement	<u>Many don't understand this term, particularly in urban and suburban areas. For rural residents, the term calls to mind power lines, gas pipelines, and other annoying intrusions</u>	Voluntary land preservation agreement
Endangered Species	<u>Upon hearing this word, your friends love you more — and your foes hate you more</u>	wildlife, animals
Infrastructure	<u>Not widely recognized</u>	Clean water investments, pollution control investments
Landscape	<u>This term evokes images of landscaping or groundskeeping — pretty, but not natural.</u>	Natural areas
Land use planning	<u>“...vague yet ominous sounding.” Belden Russonello Stewart</u>	planning ahead, balancing development and....
Nonpoint source pollution	<u>Very few people have any idea what this term means.</u>	Polluted runoff
Open	<u>This term evokes the image of land that will</u>	Natural

space	<u>be developed soon, possibly even a blighted or vacant lot that SHOULD be developed soon.</u>	area
Recreation	<u>The public does not accept recreation as a big economic force, the term has overtones of fun and triviality.</u>	Family activities
Run out of water	<u>The public perceives this term as absolute — and therefore far-fetched and unbelievable.</u>	Chronic shortage
Sprawl	<u>Different people understand differently, surprisingly many don't understand at all</u>	Overdevelopment, runaway development
Stormwater	<u>Many aren't sure what this means, and tend to believe that rainwater is clean.</u>	Polluted runoff
Sustainable	<u>Only about half report any familiarity with this term, and even they offer wildly different definitions.</u>	Responsible, planning ahead, environmentally-friendly
Tourism	<u>This term conjures up images of rude outsiders and minimum wage service jobs.</u>	Family vacations
Undeveloped land	<u>This term evokes the image of land that will be developed soon, possibly even a blighted or vacant lot that SHOULD be developed soon.</u>	Natural areas
Water conservation	<u>The public does not associate this term with long term, institutional scale efforts. It associates it with short showers, brown lawns, and other personal sacrifices that are acceptable as a temporary emergency measure but not a real solution to a long term problem.</u>	Waste prevention, efficiency measures
Watershed	<u>Half or more simply don't understand this term at all.</u>	Land and water conservation, upstream, downstream

Words With Suspected Shortcomings

Anadromous	Is this English?	Migratory
Animal Waste, Livestock Waste	“Waste” has many meanings, and some are relatively benign	Animal manure, loaded with chemicals
Flow, instream flow	For many, this term evokes the location of stream or river, or how fast the water is moving, not the amount of water that’s in it.	Water level, volume of water, amount of water
Hydrograph	Like spiograph, that cool toy we had when we were kids?	Water level, volume of water, amount of water
Nutrients	You want them in your food, why wouldn’t you want them in your water?	Polluted runoff
Parks	This is a positive term — but not something that is perceived to be in short supply	Natural area
Riparian	Are you kidding? Is this English?	Along the river, on the shore, the riverbank
Water quality	For many people, the first thing that comes to mind when they hear this term is “taste.”	Clean water, polluted water