

# TIPS FOR USING REPORTS & DOCUMENTS

**Don't** assume that single-issue reports will have nothing to offer you in your comprehensive Shoreline Master Program update.

**Do** recognize that shoreline ecological functions include habitat functions, such as those addressed in Limiting Factors Analysis, and geologic hazards like erosion and flooding addressed in floodplain management reports.

**Don't** assume that an existing regional analysis will address all SMP issues.

**Do** recognize that even regional assessments that address multiple issues such as watershed plans may not consider all shoreline ecological functions. Gaps in these more comprehensive reports should first be supplemented with results from single issues studies like TMDLs or habitat assessments before performing new analysis of raw data.

**Don't** believe a report is an *all or nothing* source.

**Do** take whatever useful contributions you can from existing reports, even if it is simply a single paragraph or image.

**Don't** think all reports must be read from cover to cover.

**Do** take the time to review the document well enough to determine what portions are most relevant. Most studies and assessments include findings, recommendations or summary sections that can help direct you to the most important sections.

**Don't** assume if a relevant report is cited in a document you're reading that everything you could possibly get out of the original document has been presented in the secondary document.

**Do** find and review the original cited document.

**Don't** ignore reports that address controversial issues, particularly those that are championed by special advocacy groups.

**Do** cite the document and clearly address the reasons it does or does not apply.

**Do** recognize that controversial issues will arise during your public process. By not citing and addressing controversial documents, your analysis is incomplete. This then puts the entire analysis at risk of being considered invalid.

**Don't** rule out the usefulness of studies based on hearsay.

**Do** review potentially relevant reports for applicability to your SMP.

**Don't** consider findings and recommendations among all reports are of equal validity and accuracy.

**Do** take into account the date of the report, more recent findings are generally more valid.

**Do** give more credence to reports that clearly state the limitations, error and confidence estimates of their methods and results.

**Do** consider whether the document went through a systematic review process and critical comments were adequately addressed .

**Do** determine whether the document was produced by a reputable firm, agency, or university by appropriate trained/certified individuals.