Dealing with Uncertainty

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1. Don't wait to be confronted. Acknowledge uncertainty up-front.

2. Put bounds on uncertainty. What range of possibilities is credible?

3. Clarify that you are more certain about some things than others.

4. Explain what you have done or are doing to reduce the uncertainty.

5. If the remaining uncertainty is very small or very difficult to reduce further, say so. Don't overpromise.

6. Explain conservativeness.

7. Report everyone's estimates -- even environmentalists' -- not just yours.

8. Don't hide behind uncertainty. If it's more than likely that the problem is real, despite lingering QA/QC problems, say so.

9. Don't perpetuate uncertainty. If there are ways to answer the question that you should be pursuing, say so.

10. <u>Never</u> say "there is no evidence of X" when you haven't done the study that tests the possibility.

11. Stress that finding out for sure may be less important than taking appropriate precautions now.

12. Acknowledge that people disagree about what to do in the face of uncertainty.

13. Get people involved in reducing uncertainty themselves.