

OPENING WINDOWS FOR CLIMATE CHANGE POLICY DEVELOPMENT: KEY FACTORS

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What are some of the key characteristics of conditions that facilitate policy making in response to climate change vulnerability? Some authors have argued that windows for policy change result from the convergence of three factors: (1) problems, (2) policies, and (3) politics. These three factors (originally described by John Kingdon) might be understood as follows: (1) some understanding among stakeholders of potential problems must have developed, (2) viable policy alternatives that have been publicly discussed must exist, and (3) there must be a political climate favoring policy change. How can this model be applied to climate change vulnerability, particularly in coastal areas? Using case studies, what can be learned about readiness to plan for, adapt to, and mitigate climate impacts? How has this or might this translate into policy change? For example, in North Carolina, there have been more than 20 years of research and dialogue about potential impacts of climate change and sea-level rise, including climate legislation and advisory body meetings (e.g., a Legislative Commission on Global Climate Change).

How does the ongoing public dialogue about the potential impacts of climate change on communities and ecosystems translate into stakeholder understanding of potential risks? For at least 25 years, there have been efforts to educate the public and decision-makers about climate change. Such high-profile events as the publication of reports by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and the release of *An Inconvenient Truth* increased public awareness. However, the issues are complex, and many people have a limited understanding of climate change science, its implications, and mitigation and adaptation options.

Recently, various governmental and non-governmental bodies have undertaken risk assessments, studied potential mitigation and adaptation strategies, and pursued implementation of policy changes to prepare for and manage risks associated with climate change. While the amount and type of available information is growing, there remain unmet needs for stakeholder engagement, as well as enhanced and applied climate-related communication, research, and services. What does Kingdon's model suggest about the key factors that open windows for policy development and decision-making related to climate change? Examples from coastal areas of how some of the associated needs could be addressed will be provided.

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