

**CLIMATE AS COMMON GROUND:
OUTREACH, EDUCATION AND RESEARCH
WITH RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES
TO ENHANCE ENVIRONMENTAL LITERACY AND STEWARDSHIP
IN THE WAQUOIT BAY AREA**

*Lisa Greber, University of Massachusetts Boston
Joan Muller, Waquoit Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve
Anamarija Frankic, University of Massachusetts Boston*

KEYWORDS: climate change, religious, participatory research, stewardship, outreach, education, estuary, environmental literacy, Waquoit Bay

The protection and management of coastal zones will face new challenges in the age of climate change. Addressing these challenges will require input and effort from a broad range of communities, and may include reaching beyond traditional participants in coastal management, such as scientists and policy-makers, to tap into the commitments and networks of religious communities. Once seen to be at odds, scientific and religious communities are now finding common ground addressing a broad range of environmental concerns.

Are there particular types of environmental programs, language or outreach strategies that best suit religious audiences? The Climate as Common Ground project seeks to address this question. The project is based at the Waquoit Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve (WBNERR), on the southern shore of Cape Cod; coastal areas like WBNERR are particularly vulnerable to potential effects of climate change.

The first phase of the project involves learning about and listening to the needs of the various religious communities in the four towns of the Upper Cape area through conversations, interviews and focus groups. The project employs a participatory research strategy; representative religious leaders and lay members assisted in developing both the survey instrument and the interview process.

The second stage of the project will implement programs, events, and communication strategies suggested by the first phase. Our initial results suggest that a preponderance of religious communities in the study area have been or are becoming interested in environmental stewardship. The communities surveyed thus far are particularly interested in better communications among religious institutions on environmental issues, and incorporating environmental information and practices into both adult and youth religious education. We hope that both this participatory process of learning the needs of the local religious communities, as well as the information we gather, will be useful for others seeking dialog on environmental issues between scientific and religious communities.

Lisa Greber
EEOS Department
University of Massachusetts Boston
100 Morrissey Blvd.
Boston, MA 02125-3393
Lisa.Greber001@umb.edu

Proceedings of Coastal Zone 09
Boston, Massachusetts
July 19 to 23, 2009

(617) 291-5298