

COMMUNICATING CLIMATE CHANGE IMPACTS AND RISKS TO COMMUNITIES: LESSONS LEARNED

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KEYWORDS: climate change, communication, risk, news media, resilience, outreach, education, sea level rise, coastal erosion, hazard mitigation

Researchers, coastal managers, and the news media strive to convey important information about coastal climate change impacts to the public and private sectors, with varying degrees of success. The impact of these efforts is largely dependent upon the quality of communication between researchers and coastal managers, on the one hand, and journalists and the public, on the other. The challenge for all science communicators is to provide clear, accurate, and relevant information – not only to those people who know to ask the right questions, but also to those who may not realize they are at risk.

This panel will address strategies for more effective communication of coastal climate change impacts and risks, from a variety of perspectives. Building upon a NOAA-funded joint project of the Maine and Oregon Sea Grant programs, and a recent Metcalf Institute publication, *Communicating on Climate Change: An Essential Resource for Journalists, Scientists, and Educators*, the panelists will discuss the existing concerns among public officials, insurers, coastal property owners, businesses, researchers, and journalists about the communication of risks to coastal communities arising from climate change.

The Sea Grant project, *Climate Variability and Coastal Community Resilience: Testing a National Model of State-based Outreach*, was designed to identify information needs of Maine coastal property owners and public officials regarding climate change and to address the barriers to action faced by these groups. Their data indicate that both Maine audiences regard themselves as not sufficiently informed on the science of climate change and its impacts to make effective management decisions; and both audiences agree that there is a need for improved government action in response to coastal storms, but disagree as to the right solutions. The project's outreach coordinator will outline the range of outreach approaches that have been developed to meet the needs of these audiences.

The panel will also include a veteran environmental journalist who will discuss how the media is changing its coverage of climate change and the challenges faced by the press in reporting long-term impacts like sea level rise. Another panelist will describe the Institute for Business and Home Safety's (IBHS) work in the public policy arena and its programs to inform coastal residents, businesses, non-profits and the public sector about how to become more disaster resistant and resilient. IBHS' goal is to reduce the social and economic effects of natural disasters and other property losses by conducting research and advocating improved construction, maintenance and preparation practices.

The panel will provide the audience with a better understanding of how professional cultural differences impact communication between academics, coastal managers, businesses, and the news media, among others, and also provide a range of strategies for improving communication between these parties in the interest of a better informed public. Panelists will also discuss how more effective communication strategies can build demand for more resilient coastal communities. The audience will be encouraged to share their own strategies during discussion.

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