Framing the Conversation about Climate Change

MARCH 8, 2019

Kelly Watkinson
Land and Climate Program Manager
Land Trust Alliance
Land and Climate Program

Goals

1. Increase the number of land trusts whose strategic conservation plans address climate impacts and promote climate resilience

2. Advance the use of land to mitigate climate change

3. Empower land trusts to encourage the buildout of renewable energy facilities while steering the facilities away from sensitive lands
Session Agenda

• Explore attitudes, strategies, and tips for integrating climate topics into your communications.

• View communication products developed by land trusts.

• Hear about the Mississippi Valley Conservancy’s experience.

• Discussion and Questions
Climate Change is a new lens through which land trusts and land managers are beginning to view their work.

Adaptation: planning and preparing for the changes and impacts that are coming.

Mitigation: working to reduce the impacts and the threat.
Yale Climate Opinion Maps

Estimated % of adults who think global warming is happening, 2018

Select Question: Global warming is happening

Click on map to select geography, or: Select a State ▼ Select a County ▼

Map showing estimated percentages of adults who think global warming is happening across the United States, with varying shades indicating different percentages.
Estimated % of adults in Wisconsin that think global warming is happening, 2018
Estimated % of adults who think global warming will harm them personally, 2018

Select Question: Global warming will harm me personally

Click on map to select geography, or: Select a State ▼ Select a County ▼

United States

Great/Moderate Amount

41%

Little/Not at all

48%
Estimated % of adults in Wisconsin that think global warming will harm them personally, 2018
I need to convince him climate change is really happening. He has to convince me climate change will affect me, and there’s something I can do about it. Only a minority of people in Wisconsin think climate change will affect them personally.
Estimated % of adults in Wisconsin that think global warming will harm plants and animals, 2018
Global Warming’s Six Americas

- Alarmed: 29%
- Concerned: 30%
- Cautious: 17%
- Disengaged: 5%
- Doubtful: 9%
- Dismissive: 9%

December 2018
n=1,114

- Highest Belief in Global Warming: Alarmed
- Most Concerned: Concerned
- Most Motivated: Cautious

- Lowest Belief in Global Warming: Dismissive
- Least Concerned: Disengaged
- Least Motivated: Doubtful
Most Americans accept that climate change is real, and arguing with hardened deniers is futile.

Successful climate communications emphasizes LOCAL consequences and LOCAL solutions.
SHOULD LAND TRUSTS TALK ABOUT CLIMATE CHANGE?

- 16 land trusts in the east circulated a survey
- 1,282 individuals took the time to respond.
Tips for Talking about Climate Change

Lead with politically neutral messages about conserving resources people already care about.

People don’t need to be talked into caring about clean water and healthy trees!

Find a trusted spokesperson to help deliver your messages.

wildland fire fighters, cooperative extension agents, county foresters

Focus on local climate change impacts and responses, rather than on the causes.

Flooding roads, invasive species damage, crop loss from drought.
Avoid technical jargon, use language that can be understood by anyone!
“Show real people”... “When images of localized climate impacts show an individual person or group of people, with identifiable emotions, they are likely to be most powerful.”

Photo: US Department of Agriculture, 2017 106th Rescue Wing provide rescue support to those effected by Hurrican Irma Evacuees from St. Maarten board a HC-130 headed to San Juan, Puerto Rico.

Photo by Climate Visuals.
“Individual ‘causes’ may provoke defensive reactions. It is best to show these behaviors at scale...”

Use This

Photo by Climate Visuals. Highway Traffic.

Instead of This

Photo by Climate Visuals. Individual person in a car.
“Survey participants... were moved more by climate impacts than by ‘causes’...”

Photo by Kenny Chesney, 2017.
Before Hurricane Irma, British Virgin Islands.

Photo by Kenny Chesney, 2017.
After Hurricane Irma, British Virgin Islands.
“Coupling images of climate impacts with a concrete behavioral action for people to take can help overcome [feelings of being overwhelmed].”

Photo by Will Parson/Chesapeake Bay Program. Restored wetlands in Caroline County, Md. Mark Furr straightens a wood duck nest box at one of two wetlands restored on his farmland in Caroline County, Md., on March 16, 2018.

Photo by Vitus Konter. Members of the Bay View Garden and Yard Society and the Bay View Neighborhood Association planting the new garden at the KK Triangle.