

US EPA ARCHIVE DOCUMENT



# ADAPTATION COMMUNICATIONS: An Overview of the Research and Practice

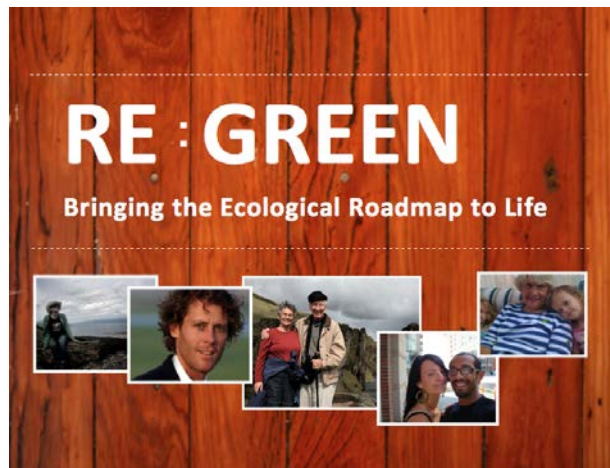
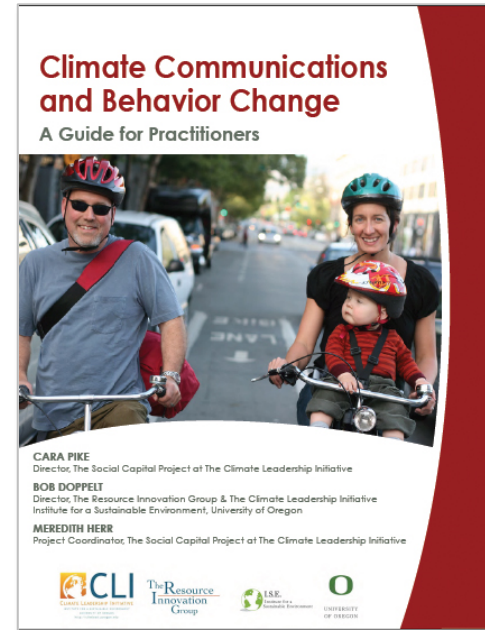
## **CARA PIKE**

Director, the Social Capital Project of The Resource Innovation Group  
and Climate Access

**Achieving Buy-In for Adaptation – March 21, 2013**

EPA's State and Local Climate and Energy Program webinar

# + THE SOCIAL CAPITAL PROJECT




# www.climateaccess.org



The network for those engaging the public in the transformation to low-carbon, resilient communities.

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**Extreme weather is influencing public opinion on climate change.**

**The Fall 2012 National Surveys on Energy and Environment**

National surveys conducted by researchers at the University of Michigan and Muhlenberg College before and after Superstorm Sandy explore how personal experiences of weather events affect public perceptions of global warming.

[Read more](#)

1,400+ members

across 42 countries, primarily US & Canada

NGO: 56%

GOV: 19%

EDU: 17%

Service: 8%

## BLOG

March 18, 2013

**The National Climate Assessment – Why You Should Provide Comments**

Missy Stults

As you may have heard, the draft 2013 U.S. National Climate Assessment (NCA) is currently out for public review and comment. But you may be asking yourself, what is this document, and why should I participate in the review period? Let's start with "why" you should become a reviewer of the NCA.

0 comments  
[Read more](#)

## FEATURED EVENT



**Achieving Buy-In for Adaptation: EPA webinar**

March 21, 1-2:30pm EDT

The first webcast in a three part mini-series "Climate Change Adaptation for State and Local Governments", hosted by EPA's State and Local Climate and Energy Program. [Learn more and register](#)

**7** reasons why the public is not engaged on climate AND WHAT TO DO ABOUT IT ▶

## FROM THE BLOGOSPHERE



**Millennials, Change, and Outlook for Climate Activism and Coverage**

John Wihbey  
March 14, 2013



**Climate change and consequences on**

Top areas of member expertise:

- Communications
- Policy
- Energy

# + COMMUNICATING CLIMATE ADAPTATION AND PREPARATION

## Literature Review and Polling Summary

- Reviewed more than 85 articles from scholarly journals and trade publications from 2007-present
- Analyzed findings from more than 70 polls from 2007-present





## Related Fields of Social Science

- Behavioral science
- Communications
- Development studies
- Behavioral Economics
- Environmental studies
- Political science
- Psychology

# + Adaptation Comes Home

## The Adaptation Conversation Has Begun

- Adaptation versus mitigation debate is largely over.
- The emphasis is no longer on climate adaptation in developing countries.
- The field of adaptation research is starting to grow.



# + The Mitigation-Adaptation Intersection

## Mitigation + Adaptation

- Interrelationships between mitigation and adaptation as joint climate response strategies.
- Greater integration is needed so mitigation and adaptation complement rather than substitute.
- Understanding of adaptation can lead to heightened interest in mitigation but more on the ground examples are needed.





# + Linking Extreme Weather to Climate

## Storms and Growing Seasons

- Americans are making the connection between extreme weather events and climate.
- Motivated reasoning and experiential learning are in affect.
- Reactive and proactive adaptation: responding to impacts vs. mitigation and technological innovation.
- Direct impacts do not have to be experienced or extreme to motivate concern.



# + Addressing Uncertainty

## Risk Perception

- “Adaptive management”: decision-making framework that embraces uncertainty.
- Risk perception plays a key role in adaptation communications.
- Successful risk communication depends on recognizing uncertainty.
- “Insurance” frame resonates with public to prepare and protect communities.

*“Some people may disagree with the science of global warming, but we can all agree that taking steps to make our communities better prepared to deal with drought.”*



# + The Preparation Frame

Being prepared is the right thing to do.

- “Preparation” or preparing for climate impacts/extreme weather events have traction.
- Preparation sounds proactive, hopeful and can bridge to “climate disruption” over time.
- People may not accept global warming, but will still take steps to prepare.

Climate preparation allows for alternative framing around health, safety, prosperity.



# + Vulnerability and Resilience

## Community Well-Being

- Vulnerable populations are often disproportionately susceptible to impacts due to socio-economics.
- “Equitable adaptation” as a response to justice concerns.
- Resilience: ability for systems to cope with climate impacts.
- Need for public health system to improve resilience and increase “adaptive capacity”.
- Protecting local resources, such as public health and water, is seen as an important action.



# Perceived Importance of Protecting Local Resources



The federal government is encouraging communities to prepare for the impacts of global warming so that people and property are protected. How important do you think is it for *your community* to take steps to protect the following from global warming?

		National Average	Alarmed (12%)	Concerned (27%)	Cautious (25%)	Disengaged (10%)	Doubtful (15%)	Dismissive (10%)
The water supply	<i>Extremely important</i>	<b>36</b>	69	54	30	26	11	7
	<i>Very important</i>	<b>26</b>	21	30	36	33	21	4
	<i>Somewhat important</i>	<b>18</b>	3	10	25	21	33	13
	<i>Not too important</i>	<b>6</b>	0	4	3	1	17	14
	<i>Not at all important</i>	<b>9</b>	1	0	3	5	14	54
	<i>Does not apply to my community</i>	<b>5</b>	6	2	4	14	4	8
The public's health	<i>Extremely important</i>	<b>33</b>	66	48	28	27	10	5
	<i>Very important</i>	<b>29</b>	22	38	37	34	20	5
	<i>Somewhat important</i>	<b>19</b>	9	10	26	22	34	14
	<i>Not too important</i>	<b>7</b>	0	3	3	1	19	17
	<i>Not at all important</i>	<b>9</b>	0	0	3	4	15	54
	<i>Does not apply to my community</i>	<b>3</b>	3	0	4	12	2	5
Agriculture	<i>Extremely important</i>	<b>33</b>	66	50	25	28	11	5
	<i>Very important</i>	<b>29</b>	22	37	41	28	17	3
	<i>Somewhat important</i>	<b>17</b>	4	9	23	20	32	14
	<i>Not too important</i>	<b>6</b>	3	1	3	4	21	14
	<i>Not at all important</i>	<b>9</b>	0	0	3	4	13	55
	<i>Does not apply to my community</i>	<b>6</b>	6	3	5	15	6	9

Source: Leiserowitz, A, Maibach, E, Roser-Renouf, C, & Smith, N (2011) *Global Warming's Six Americas*. Yale University and George Mason University

# RECOMMENDATIONS:



## 1. Caution in conveying impacts

“Mad Max”



Impacts projected  
into the future



“Realistic Hope”



Direct, local  
impacts



# RECOMMENDATIONS:



## 2. Building from extreme weather to action

- Link storms to larger trends and climate disruption
- Highlight record setting events, frequency and severity
- Tie to solutions and benefits



# RECOMMENDATIONS:

## 3. Tap Values

- Safe, prosperous communities
- Prevention pays
- Readiness
- Better future
- Health and well-being





# + FRAMING CONSIDERATIONS:



- Urgency is lost when impacts are projected into the future.

*Need to emphasize near-time consequences with supporting facts when possible.*

- Avoid triggering protectionist or anti-immigration views.

*Emphasize collective action.*

- Adaptation is a long-term issue where success is not obvious.

*Set milestones and avoid the idea that we can put an end to global warming.*

# + Contact Us



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**CARA PIKE**

director  
250.748.1784

[cara@thesocialcapitalproject.org](mailto:cara@thesocialcapitalproject.org)