Voices of the Chesapeake: Influencing Local and Global Citizenship in the Face of Climate Change

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Introduction
The Chesapeake Semester

- Interdisciplinary study of the Chesapeake Bay watershed and region
- Focus on complex connections between environment and society
- Field-based investigation and learning
Climate Change Chesapeake
Introduction

Observed Sea Level Rise
Introduction

Sea Level Rise: 100 yr projections

Projections of relative sea-level rise for Maryland

Introduction

Sea Level Rise: 100 yr projections

Current

0.3m SLR

1.0m SLR

NOAA, Sea level Rise Viewer
Methodology

- Observed general trends of discussions on climate change over 7 years of Chesapeake Semester
- Conducted primary interviews of representative voices
Results

Climate Perspectives Identified:

- Firm Believer: scientifically literate / politically active
- Believer: media literate / may be politically active
- Resistant Believer: science skeptic / confused / not active
- Non-Believer: Science skeptic / government skeptic
- Firm Non-Believer: counter climate change literate / politically active
“There is no confusion in the industry. From the industrial perspective we don’t see [confusion]- we just know [sea level rise] is here and have to contemplate the effects.”

Rupert Denney, General Manager, private port facility, Baltimore
“...my dad, who’s 95, say[s] the Earth goes in cycles...in my mind it looks like the family’s point is right.”

Susan Meredith, small business owner, near wetland preserve
“Some people would say I’ve got to…prepare my boat- and they have more immediate things to tend to. Our hands are tied to the things we make a living from.”

Pastor Rick Edmund, Methodist Minister, Smith Island
Sea-level rise is an issue that some Maryland communities have been discussing recently. Sea-level rise refers to increases in the average height of water relative to the land. Do you think that sea-level rise is currently happening along Maryland’s coastlines? If you answered either yes or no, how sure are you?

Akerlof, 2014
Discussion

- 46% say public protection from CC should be high priority for government
- 47% very sure CC is happening
- 46% certain CC caused by human activities

Akerof et al., 2015
Why is There Confusion?
Discussion

Counter Climate Change

- Counter climate change movement:
  - 91 organizations
  - $900 million annual income
Recommendations

THANK YOU!

- Better communication of science--on all levels
- Better educating next generations
- Better understanding of diverse cultural background and priorities of the public


