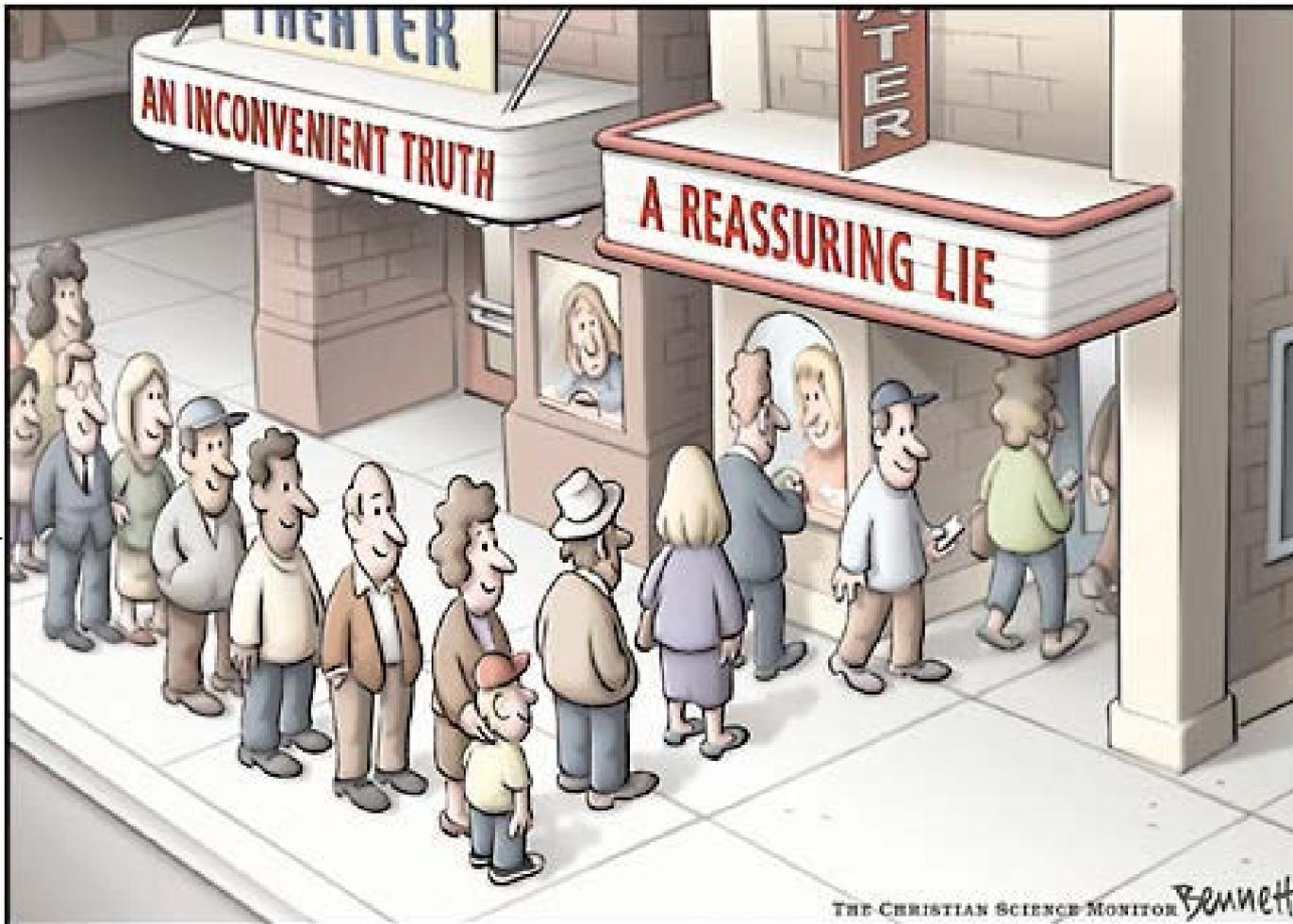


# Engaging the Public on Adaptation to Climate Change

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Coming to a movie theater near you:  
**“Come Hell or High Water”**  
(or: Bring it on, we can cope!)



Source: Bennett, CSM, September 20, 2006

THE CHRISTIAN SCIENCE MONITOR Bennett

# Overview of Presentation

- **Engaging the Public on Adaptation**
  - How is it different, how is it the same as engagement on other issues?
  - Why bother? – Getting clear on purpose and intent
  - Who should be engaged?
  - Barriers to engagement and adaptation actions?
  - In what ways can we engage the public?
- **Communication & Engagement to Facilitate Social Change**
  - Basic model for effective engagement
  - Public perceptions
  - Goals of engagement
  - Framing adaptation
  - Empowering the public
  - The need for public dialogue, early and often
- **Some Basic Communication Resources**



# Engaging the Public on Adaptation to Climate Change

## How is it different?

- Continued skepticism among some about climate change
- Uncertainty around climate change
- Adaptation is still an unfamiliar concept
- Audience interest and readiness?
- Persuasion that both mitigation and adaptation are needed
- Non-stationarity of climate demands periodic revisiting of decisions and policies, ongoing monitoring, learning, and thus repeated public engagement
- Local and state governments limited in their capacity
  - (Access to) knowledge of the issue
  - Staff and technical resources to do adaptation planning, identify strategies, engage public



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# Engaging the Public on Adaptation to Climate Change

## How is it the same?

- Management issues not new, just bigger
  - It's hard to get people
    - involved anyway (on anything)
    - to move beyond self-interest
    - to consider long-term issues
    - with hardened positions to collaborate (past legacies?)
  - Some “sacred cows” will need to be addressed, eventually
    - Private property rights
    - Development and growth
    - Responsibilities and risk sharing between public and private parties
  - Demand for government to lead, be role model, do its part
  - Demand that private interests do their part, cooperate toward the common good
  - Same interest groups likely to care
- 
- For now, the same legal context
    - Authority to address climate change
    - Structural incentives/disincentives
  - For now, the same programmatic options to begin addressing climate change, for example
    - Sect. 309 Enhancement Program
    - Sect. 306A projects
    - Local planning cycles

# Why Engage the Public on Adaptation?

## Some good arguments, for starters...

- Ad-hoc, reactive adaptation by individuals will occur, but likely to be more expensive, uncoordinated, negative side effects for public goods
- Many decisions will go beyond individuals' capacity
  - Financial
  - Scientific/technical assessment of need, adequacy
  - Local/regional coordination
- Planned, proactive, publicly guided and facilitated and orderly adaptation is or should be the responsibility of government



# Why Bother? – The Principled Reasons

- **Governments can't do it alone**

**Achieving major policy outcomes, requires greater engagement and participation from citizens**

- Political/civic engagement to shape policies
- Political support / consent to pass/change policies & legislation
- Behavioral implementation of policies

- **Governments shouldn't do it alone**

**There are strong moral and political arguments for protecting and enhancing personal responsibility**

- Empower residents rather than tell them what to do
- Enable society to function with a less coercive state and judicial system
- Exercising responsibility strengthens individual character and moral capacity
- Greater personal responsibility – in terms of restraint and support for others enhances the quality of life of the community

- **Cost savings in doing it together**

**Involving the public in active implementation/behavior change can be significantly more cost-effective than traditional service delivery.**

- Enable public goods to be provided with a lower tax burden



# Who to Engage



## Who has a stake in the issue?

Anyone being or feeling affected due to:

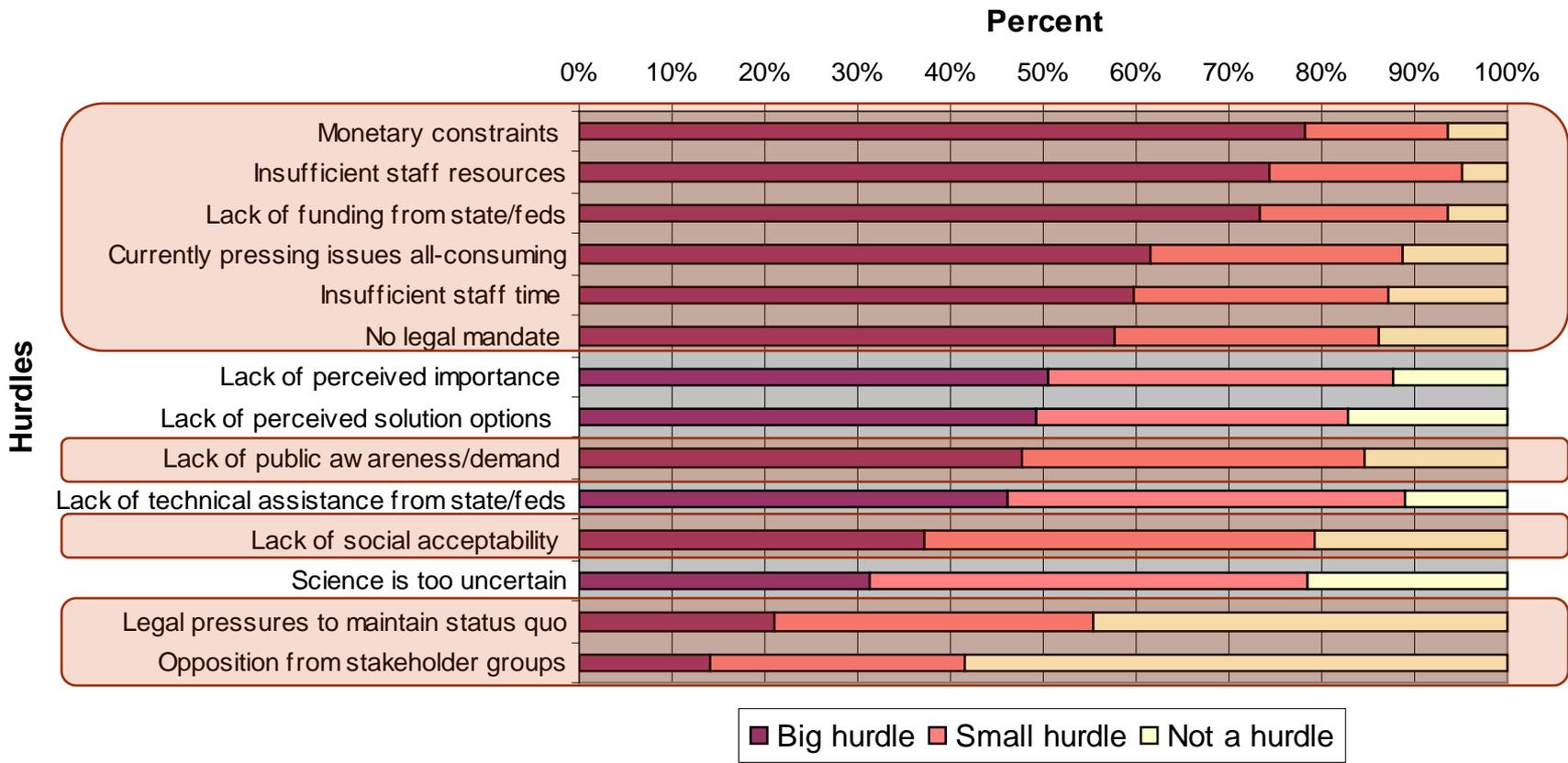
- Geographic proximity or exposure
- Economic stakes in an asset, resource, or a particular piece of property
- Interest in outcomes of a decision, or the financial risks that arise from a particular change
- Non-economic benefits from the use of a resource or asset, including the amenity value, rights of way, vistas, etc.
- Socio-cultural implications or meanings of an issue, including issues of justice, welfare, health, safety, tradition, and religion
- Broad concern for environmental issues, including protection of the environment for its own right, sustainability, and subsistence
- One's legal or professional obligation, interest, and authority to be concerned, investigate, or make decisions about an issue; and
- Other values reflected in ethical and moral concerns

## Why do people not engage?

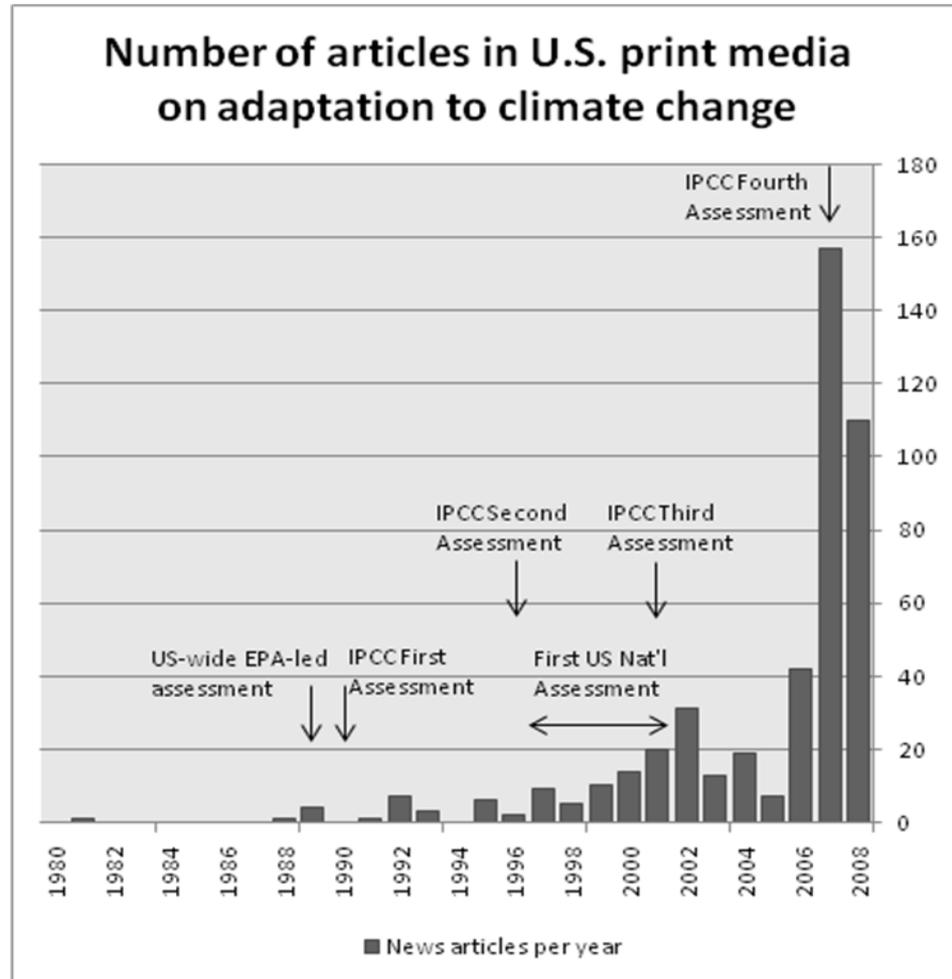
- Distrust in the sponsoring agency or leaders
- Skepticism that process will lead to beneficial outcomes
- Lack of opportunity for the engagement process to make a difference to research or policy agendas (e.g., bad timing, lack of institutional link to decision-makers)
- Disappointing past experience
- Dislike or distrust of, and/or conflict among, participants
- Perceived lack of involvement of key players
- Lack of time and/or financial resources to participate effectively
- Lack of mandate to participate
- Lack of understanding of the issue and the stakes
- Perceived or real lack of expertise (technical, procedural, legal, etc.)
- Lack of interest in issue or process (general or relative to other pressing issues)
- Shyness to engage in public

# Coastal Managers' Perceived Barriers to Local Adaptation to Date

**Perceived Hurdles to Local Action on Global Warming Impacts**



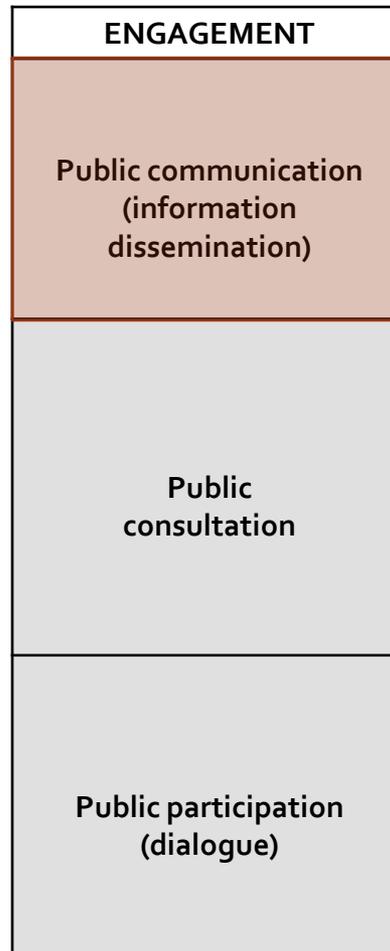
# Adaptation Only Emerging in Public Mind



Source: Moser, S.C. (forthcoming)

Data based on Lexis-Nexis search of articles in all U.S. newspapers for all available dates (to the end of 2008).  
The total number of relevant articles between 1981 and 2008 was 462. 67% of all articles appeared between 2006 and 2008.

# Ways to Engage the Public



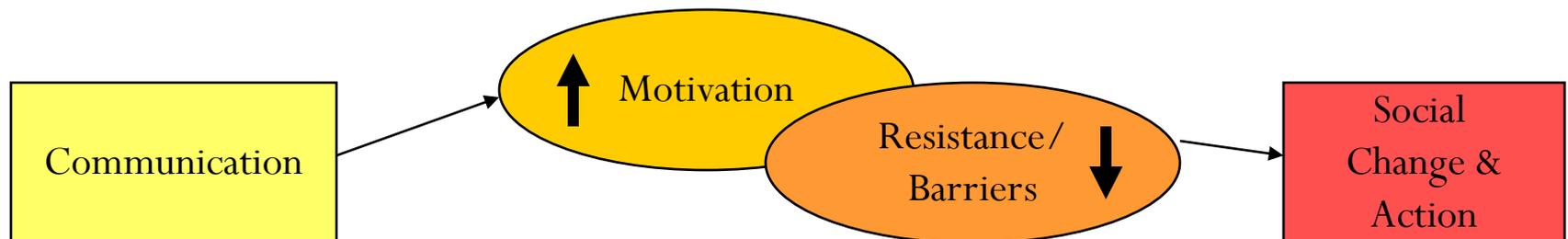
# Toward Active Engagement

For *communication* to be effective, i.e., to facilitate an intended societal response or desired *social change*, it must accomplish two things:

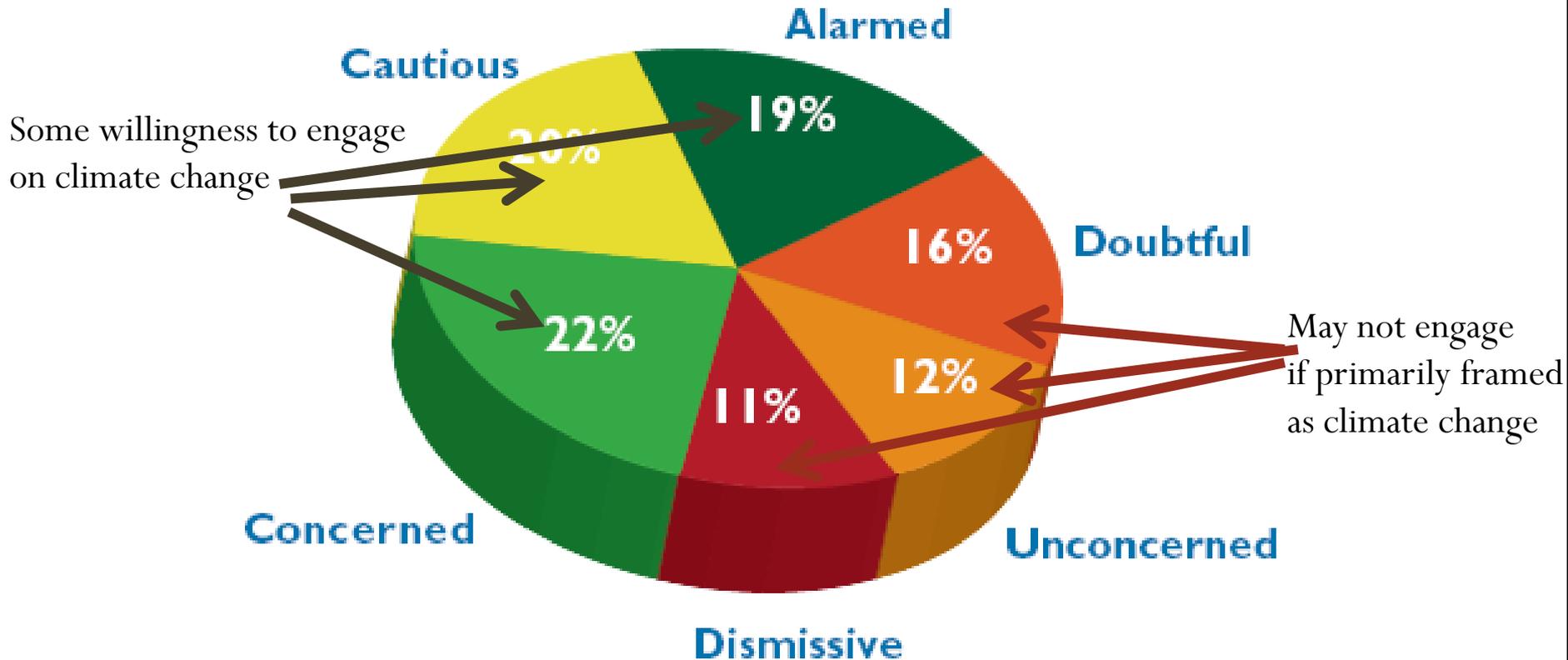
(1) sufficiently *elevate and maintain the motivation*

to change a practice or policy  
&

(2) *contribute to lowering barriers and resistance*  
to doing so



# The Public is NOT all on the Same Page about climate change

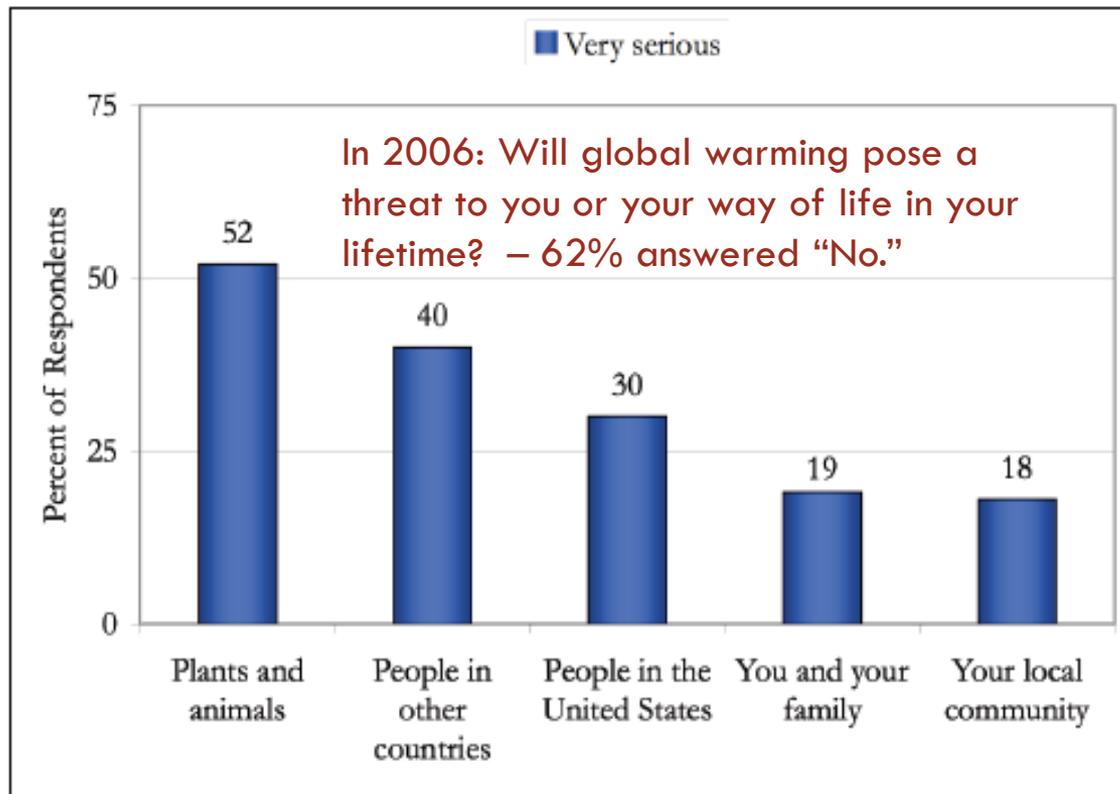


Source: Leiserowitz et al. (2008) Global Warming's Six Americas

**Research on public attitudes and understanding of adaptation urgently needed!!!**

# How serious a threat?

“How serious of a threat is global warming to -- [ITEMS READ IN ORDER] -- very serious, somewhat serious, not very serious, or not at all serious?”



Sources: Leiserowitz (2007)

# Goals for communication and engagement on climate change at this time

## **Inform and educate about climate change, solutions**

- Solid, basic understanding of human causes
- Level of scientific consensus about the basics
- The magnitude of the problem
- The need for comprehensive risk management
- What is mitigation, what is adaptation?



Source: Finfacts.com

## **Mobilize people to actively engage**

- Make global warming & solutions personal, local, urgent
- Help people think and care about the challenge
- Enable and empower people
- Illustrate the range, feasibility, implications of solutions
- Convey an “all hands on deck” situation



## **Initiate deeper social, cultural changes**

- Go as far “upstream” as possible
- Facilitate dialogue, visioning
- Exemplify climate-cognizant social norms



Source: Steve Forrest for International Herald Tribune

# Framing Adaptation to Climate Change

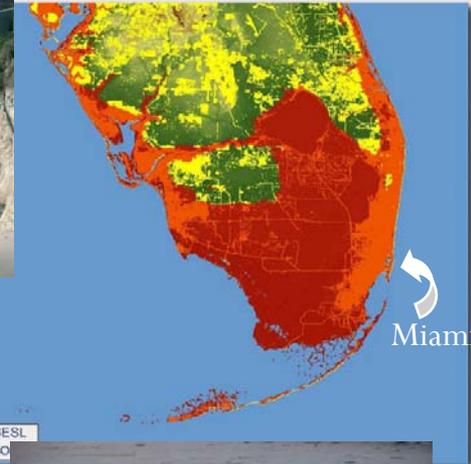
## Some possibilities:

- Coping with the Impacts of Climate Change
- Protect – Accommodate – Retreat
- Taking a Comprehensive Approach: Avoiding the Unmanageable – Managing the Unavoidable
- Protecting Our Coasts: Public Safety, Public Access, Public Welfare
- An Ounce of Preparedness is Worth Avoiding a Pound of Loss and Litigation
- Precaution: Best Insurance/Investment Strategy
- Toward Climate Resilience: Prevent, Prepare, Respond, Recover
- Living with the Sea (Not Fighting It)

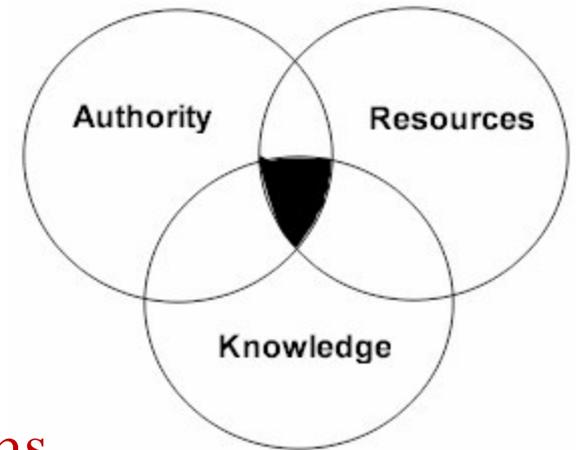


# The Danger of Ignoring the Emotional Impact of Climate Change Information

- Impacts “über alles”!?
- Very limited understanding of solutions
- Problems of denial and numbing vis-à-vis overwhelming problems
- The need for realistic hope
- A sustaining vision



# Empowerment



- Display, explain, and demonstrate **solutions** (personal, technological, policy, economic)
- Create a **sense of the collective**
- Aim for **intrinsic motivations** (deeply held values)
- Provide enough (not too much information), **practical** help, build skills, sense of **confidence**, **implementation intentions**
- Ask for public **commitments**, agree on course of action
- Provide **visibility** for leadership and accomplishment (pride)

# Why Public Dialogue?



- **Mass /one-way communication is not enough**
  - Good at public/policy agenda setting
  - Fails to address communication needs of different audiences
  - Fails to facilitate and sustain personal engagement and behavior change
  - Fails to provide forums for deeper engagement, especially across social/political differences
- **To change, we need social support**
  - Deep social changes are required to make the required shift in energy production, consumption, how we interact with and relate to the environment
  - Change in habits, social norms require repeated reinforcement and social support over a long period of time
  - Deep societal transformation creates its own demands for processing, coping...
- **Needs for forums for deep social engagement, ongoing dialogue, and social support/accountability go unmet to date**
  - Learning (problem, response options, needs, implications)
  - Understanding, addressing power relationships
  - Questioning values and social norms
  - Visioning of a desirable future

'nough said to start the conversation...

**Thank you!**



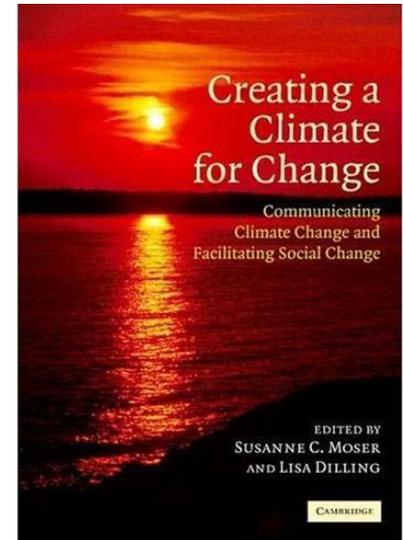
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# Communications Resources

- Moser/Dilling - Key Project Publications
  - 2004 – “Making Climate Hot” in *Environment* 46(10): 36-46
  - 2006 – “Talk of the City” in *Environmental Research Letters* 1(1)
  - 2007 – *Creating a Climate for Change* (Cambridge)
  - 2008 – “Toward a Deeper Engagement of the US Public on Climate Change” *Internatl. Journal of Sustainability Communication* 3 (2008): 119-132
  - For more publications see: <http://www.isse.ucar.edu/communication/>
- IPPR, “Warm Words: How we are telling the climate story...”:  
<http://www.ippr.org.uk/>
- Ankelohe conversation on climate change communication: [http://www.opendemocracy.net/globalization-climate\\_change\\_debate/ankelohe\\_3550.jsp](http://www.opendemocracy.net/globalization-climate_change_debate/ankelohe_3550.jsp)
- The Communication Initiative: <http://www.comminit.com/index.html>
- Special issue (3, June 2008), *International Journal of Sustainability Communication*, on climate change communication - <http://www.ijsc-online.org/>
- Special issue, *Science Communication* (forthcoming), on climate change communication  
<http://www.sagepub.com/journalsProdDesc.nav?prodId=Journal200892>
- Leiserowitz A. et al. (2008). Global Warming’s “Six Americas”  
<http://environment.yale.edu/uploads/SixAmericas.pdf>
- Cone, J. et al. (2008). Climate Change Survey of Oregon Coast Decision-Makers 2008, forthcoming, OR Seagrant.



# Some Key Elements of Effective Government Communication

- **Audience-specific communication**
  - Understanding and needs differ > targeted outreach
  - Research to identify audiences' concerns, level of understanding, values, information needs, barriers to change
- **Communication informed by state-of-the-art social science**
- **Integrated communications strategy**
  - Coordinated and focused campaign with clear, simple, empowering message
  - Messages, supporting information, and resources complement each other and support taking action
  - Range of communication platforms, channels, forums
  - Training for messengers
- **Partnerships and coordination with others**
- **Rapid-response capacity**
- **Realization of need for long-term engagement**
  - Communication itself needs to change over time
  - Climate change will be with us for a LONG time!
  - Reasonable isolation from, yet integration with, politics
  - Forums for public dialogue
- **Adequate staffing and funding**
  - to develop and maintain outreach resources and staff capacity

