

## ***Changing Expectations: Using Film to Help Hyde County Residents Prepare for Floods***

**Brinn, Daniel<sup>1</sup>** and Jessica Whitehead<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*Hyde County Soil and Water Conservation District*

<sup>2</sup>*NC Sea Grant*

The second largest county by area in North Carolina, Hyde County is a low lying coastal county with its mainland along the Pamlico Sound, and Ocracoke Island, accessible only by boat or ferry, facing southeastward along the Atlantic Ocean. On effective flood maps, 78% of Hyde County's land area is in the FEMA 100-year floodplain, defined as the area in which a flood has a 1% annual chance of occurring. Approximately 83% of Hyde County's total population lives in the FEMA 100-year floodplain; 82% of its population over age 65, and 91% of its population in poverty, live inside this floodplain. Flooding occurs regularly in the County from both tropical systems (notably Isabel in 2003 and Irene in 2011) and nor'easters, making it critical that Hyde County's residents get protection for their properties through flood insurance and take steps to elevate their homes, including being prepared to take advantage for grant funding for home elevations when it becomes available.

North Carolina Sea Grant used funds from a National Sea Grant Coastal Communities Climate Adaptation Initiative grant to contract with Rick Sullivan Media, Inc. to produce a new short film series titled "Changing Expectations." This series will not only highlight changes taking place in North Carolina's coastal environment, but also describe actions that local communities are already taking to be better prepared. Sea Grant's partnership with Hyde County made this an ideal first film for the series, because Hyde County is preparing for its next review under the Community Rating System (CRS) and many of the adaptation actions it is encouraging its residents to take are also creditable messages under the CRS 300 series when communicated in active language. Sea Grant's coastal communities hazards adaptation specialist worked with Rick Sullivan Media to ensure that creditable messages would be included in the video, including advising residents to purchase flood insurance and providing them with contact information in Hyde County for assistance with home elevations. Hyde County Soil and Water Conservation Department provided critical context on flooding and flood control measures in place in the County, while Kris Cahoon Noble, Office of Economic Planning and Development, shared her personal experience with flooding during Hurricane Irene to emphasize the benefits of elevating beyond the minimum required base flood elevation when elevating a structure. Combined with Sullivan Media's storytelling experience, the video is being well received in Hyde County, with numerous shares via social media since its public release in mid-August.

In this panel discussion, we will share experiences about making the short film, including challenges encountered when trying to mix creditable, actionable messages with good storytelling, and welcome suggestions from the audience on promoting its use to help Hyde County's residents become more resilient to flooding.

From this effort and academy, we have learned that Extension personnel have similar views about climate change as the general public, and need more training on climate science and resilience. Messaging is important and it is imperative to develop appropriate messages for each audience. Climate change and resilience is a critical issue with little time available for research to catch up with the changes, therefore empowering Extension will help lead to more on the ground efforts to adapt. Adaptation to changes in climate are critical to build resilience in these sectors and may be best delivered or shared by producers themselves, with assistance from cooperative Extension. Academy participants have moved on to incorporate information on management for greater resilience into their programming, and next steps include bringing participants and others back together to share lessons learned and resources with each other. These attendees have already shown leadership for their states

on this issue. Ultimately, building knowledge on resilience and enhancing the capabilities of Extension personnel to address climate change will increase climate–resilient natural resource management on the ground more quickly.