



Presenter

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Deliberative Decision-Making on Issues in a Changing Climate

Addressing coastal issues under climate change requires the engagement of scientists, decision-makers, and citizens utilizing all of the technical, cultural, and political knowledge at their disposal to develop solutions for complex problems. The inclusion of coastal residents provides more comprehensive, substantive policy decisions. Our Coastal Future Forum seeks to learn more about utilizing the method of deliberative discussion to engage residents of coastal South Carolina with natural resource managers, government officials, and scientists to develop policy responses to coastal challenges of protecting environmental health, preserving biodiversity, conserving marine resources, and planning for wise use of energy and sand resources. Research objectives include learning more about how issues are prioritized in an inclusive process, analyzing differences in public opinion on these issues and comparing opinions from the deliberative process with statewide and national knowledge and beliefs.

A survey was administered to South Carolina coastal residents to gauge their opinions on environmental issues. Respondents to the coastal survey were also given the opportunity to attend a two and a half-day forum in North Charleston to learn about and discuss the topics relating to climate resilience. During the forum, 80 participants heard talks by expert-scientists, then formed small groups to engage in facilitated deliberative discussion of the issues and potential policy solutions. At the conclusion of the forum, the participants provided a summary of their small-group discussions to the entire forum and completed a post-forum survey with questions similar to the initial survey. Results from this project will provide a better understanding of deliberative discussion as a method of natural resource decision-making and how the public perceives and prioritizes issues related to climate resilience. This talk will focus on the perception of environmental health risks to coastal S.C. residents and how cultural worldview and deliberation might change it. Analysis for this project was conducted using survey and transcript data from the forum to determine the perception of environmental health risks in coastal residents and the cultural significance associated with those risks, respectively.

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