

Communities and Parks: Communicating Climate Change Workshop



**September 20, 2012
Alaska SeaLife Center
Seward, Alaska**

Workshop Summary Report



Project Overview

National Parks Conservation Association (NPCA) and the National Park Service (NPS) Climate Change Response Program are collaborating on a project focused on the development and application of sustainable strategies and tools for communicating science-based messages about climate change affecting local communities and the national parks. The goal is to foster partnerships between NPS Research Learning Centers, parks and partners, such as small businesses in gateway communities, around local climate change response initiatives.

Project components for each participating RLC include:

1. Identify partners and gateway communities that will be the focus of climate change communications, focusing in particular on businesses, economic, civic, and education leaders.
2. Survey partners to determine the following information:
 - a. Current means by which they communicate about climate change with their stakeholders and get them engaged in responding to it; how/whether the park is a subject of their messages; their goals and needs for enhanced communication and engagement; and
 - b. The particular climate change activities that partners are willing to engage in, e.g., greenhouse gas mitigation projects, communicating climate change impacts or mitigation opportunities to their stakeholders, jointly planning for climate change impacts on shared resources ('scenario planning').
3. Conduct workshops with partners focused on three outcomes:
 - a. Develop a common understanding with partners about the economic and other values parks provide to community partners, how climate change impacts those values, and how the park and its partners can work together on preparing for and adapting to climate change.
 - b. Identify one or more climate change topics that the RLC and partners will communicate to stakeholders, such as (i) how climate change affects resources shared by the parks and their communities, (ii) greenhouse gas mitigation opportunities, or (iii) climate change response planning ('scenario planning').
 - c. Identify and develop practical and effective tools that partners can use to communicate about climate change with their customers and other stakeholders.
4. Implement the climate change learning activities with partners.

Summary of Presentations

Kenai Fjords National Park Climate Change Presentation

Jeff Mow, Superintendent

The National Park Service has been mandated to be a role model in the community by reducing their carbon footprint. Kenai Fjords National Park has analyzed fossil fuel use in the Park,

reviewed ways to increase efficiency and reduce use. Park vehicles were the largest consumers of fossil fuel and the Park has been able to reduce consumption by 30 % through the addition of hybrid, electric and vegetable oil vehicles. Incentives for employees, including earning additional annual leave, have been used to encourage bike usage and carpooling.

Since the Park has set a goal to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions 40% from 2006 levels by 2015, they have implemented a number of mitigation measures. For example, at the Exit Glacier Nature Center, hydrogen fuel cells have been installed to increase energy efficiency. Additionally, the park has shifted from fuel oil to propane in public use cabins.

Superintendent Mow discussed some of the adaptation strategies at the Park in preparing for climate change. This includes developing multiple possible future scenarios taking into consideration variables like ocean acidification, temperature change, increased storm frequency and severity as well as changes in precipitation. By viewing historical and measurable data with different variables, staff can categorize a range of possibilities to help set strategies for adapting to those future changes.

Following the Climate Change Education Partnership (CCEP), an NSF funded research project involving NPS, Fish and Wildlife Service, National Parks Conservation Association and Colorado State, other climate change collaborations on the Kenai Peninsula are occurring including a partnership with the Kenai National Wildlife Refuge, Chugach National Forest, Kenai Fjords NPS, the Kenai Watershed Forum, Kenai Borough and other surrounding gateway communities.

Survey Results

Karen Hevel-Mingo, Climate Program Manager, NPCA

The Climate Change Communication Survey was distributed in June and July, 2012 to key stakeholders and potential partners in communities near Kenai Fjords, Lake Clark and Katmai National Parks and Preserves. The purpose of the survey was to get a baseline for current community understanding of climate change impacts to the region, assess current efforts to mitigate and adapt for climate change and look for future opportunities. Participants were asked questions about climate change attitudes, connection with local national parks, what climate change actions and communication they were currently doing and future opportunities. Forty-seven participants filled out the survey including 35 from the tourism sector, 3 civic leaders, 1 educator, 3 environmental conservationists and 5 “others”.

Perceived Value of the National Park

	Kenai Stakeholders	KFNP Visitor Sample*	NPS Visitor Sample*
This national park is very special to me	4.7	4.3	4.4
This national park is one of my favorite places	4.3	N/A	N/A
I identify strongly with this national park	4.3	3.4	3.9
...makes surrounding area a better place to live	4.5	N/A	N/A
Visiting...is something I recommend to others	4.6	N/A	N/A

1=Strongly disagree / 2 = Disagree / 3 = Neutral/Undecided / 4 = Agree / 5 = Strongly agree

* Data from 2011 CSU/NPCA "Place-Based Climate Change Education Partnership" (CCEP)

Those surveyed had a strong connection to the national parks on or near the Kenai Peninsula, even more than surveyed park visitors to Kenai or park visitors nationally. A high percentage felt the park was a special place to them personally and that it made the area a better place to live. As local community members, 91% agreed that the parks contributed a high economic value to the area.

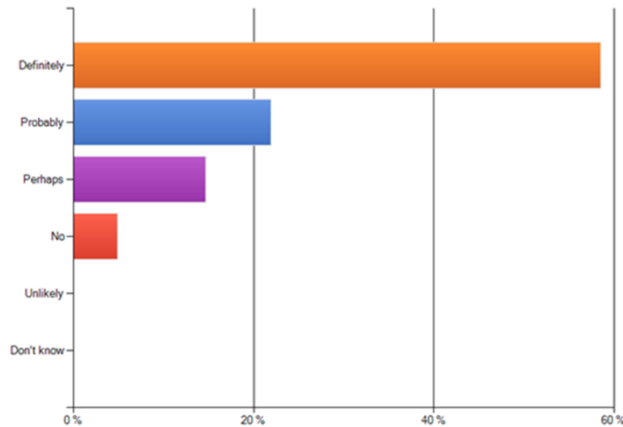
Perceived Economic Value of the National Park

	Kenai Stakeholders
The park is important to the strength of the local economy	4.6
The park is important to the success of my business or org.	4.0

1=Strongly disagree / 2 = Disagree / 3 = Neutral/Undecided / 4 = Agree / 5 = Strongly agree

When asked about climate change, approximately 86% were “very” or “extremely” sure that climate change was happening; again a greater percentage than park visitors. Additionally, the majority felt that they were witnessing local climate changes to the landscape, were concerned about the future of the park and felt that individuals should be doing more.

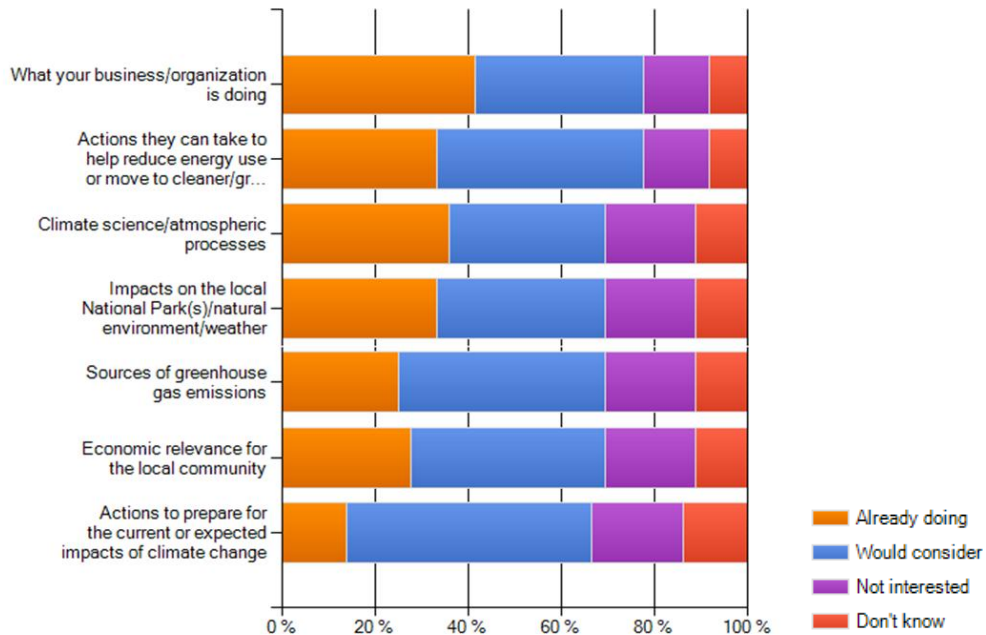
Are you seeing local impacts?



Many survey participants were taking some actions to reduce their impact, such as adjusting thermostats, buying local and driving less or more efficiently. The majority said they would consider doing more including adaptation measures and purchasing renewable energy.

Many opportunities were of interest to the participating community members when it came to partnering with the Research Learning Center and the park and furthering communication of climate change to their customers and stakeholders. These included working collaboratively to craft common climate change messages, participating in scenario planning for adaptation, and learning more about climate change impacts to the region.

What are you currently communicating about climate change?



World Café Questions

Following the morning's presentations, several pre-designed questions were considered by the workshop participants through small, informal table discussions. The questions considered were:

1. Who is our audience?
2. What aspects of climate change in our park and community should we be communicating to our stakeholders?
3. What are the tools we could use to communicate science-based messages about those topics?
4. What are the opportunities for the parks and community partners in adapting to climate change?

World Café Results

When asked to identify the top priority audience that participants felt the community and park should be communicating with on climate change, local community and experiential users were the top two choices. This was followed by the education system/state standards office, city government and virtual park visitors.

Once the audience was identified, the discussions continued by exploring what local climate change aspects were of the highest priority to communicate. The group felt that it was important to convey an understanding of "the TRUTH as we know it" - in other words, the science for current and predicted impacts.



Participants also felt it was important to model sustainability and lead by example. Other ideas included adaptation and the concept of "local is global" connectivity.

In order to communicate science-based messages about these identified aspects of climate change, priority tools including training, such as "train-the-trainer" and leveraging the web and social media were suggested. Traditional media including PSA's, flyers, and articles, community programs (speaker series, interpretive walks, school programs), citizen science and tour operator/business workshops might provide additional methods to engage the community.





Developing shared goals, community projects and partnerships hold potential opportunities for the park and local communities to adapt to climate change. The participants felt it is important to work collaboratively to improve quality of life and the livability of the community. Other concepts included education around adaptation, encouraging a large landscape perspective and involvement in borough planning, proactive disaster planning for events like flooding. This last suggestion was particularly relevant given the weather during the workshop (see Appendix).

Next Steps

Workshops will be held at the two additional pilot locations for the project, Indiana Dunes and Glacier National Park. Results from all three locations for surveys and workshops will be analyzed and compiled into a final summary report which will be made available to all of the participants and stakeholders for the project. Results from the project will also be presented at several conferences including Chicago Wilderness Congress in November 2012.

NPS and NPCA will work collaboratively to identify opportunities to implement recommendations identified through the survey and workshop process. Potential to scale up the project, involving other RLC's, parks and local communities will be explored as well.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the following businesses and organizations who sponsored or contributed to the workshop:

The Seward Chamber of Commerce
The Alaska SeaLife Center
Major Marine Tours

Appendix

Link to survey results presentation: [Kenai Survey Results](#)

All recorded World Café question responses:

Question 1: Who is our Audience?

- Education System (State standards government)
- Virtual park users
- Web audience
- Local community
- City Government
- Business owners and employees
- Witnesses to change
- Experiential users

Question 2: What aspects of climate change in our park and community should we be communicating to our stakeholders?

- Science methods (How we know what we know)
- Science/Research Results
- The TRUTH as we know it
- Scientific evidence of change
- Local is Global Connectivity
- How individuals can make a difference
- Adapting to change
- Economic Impacts to businesses
- Uncertainty
- Modeling Sustainability
- Benefits of sustainability
- Park's mitigation efforts
- Weather/Climate Difference

Question 3: What are the tools we could use to communicate science-based messages about those topics?

- Media –flyers, PSA's, news, exhibits
- New releases/articles
- Messaging/advertising
- Training incl. train-the –trainer
- Tour operators/Business operators workshop
- Web/Internet, Social Media

- Web-social media, podcasts, videos
- Programs –community, school, interpretive talks/walks, speaker series
- Interpretive programs
- Onsite interactive programs –emphasize scientific method
- Exhibits
- Citizen science

Question 4: What are the opportunities for the parks and community partners in adapting to climate change?

- Civic engagement series
- Webinars/speaker series
- Meetings/community forums
- Film festivals
- Web/social media
- Education
- High School community service requirement
- Stall doors (toilet)
- Improve quality of life/livability of community
- Proactive disaster planning –floods
- Landscape perspective/borough planning
- Shared goals/community projects/partnerships
- Develop joint GREEN messaging and technologies
- Look for concession opportunities related to mitigation efforts (EG shuttle)
- Identify single and joint local goal for local green tag program

The Weather

For nearly a week prior to the workshop, a persistent storm system had been dumping rain in the Seward area. These “hundred year” storms have now been occurring with greater frequency. The afternoon before the workshop, a state of emergency was announced in Seward and the surrounding area due to flooding. Electricity was out for a few hours, and travel advisories were issued for many roads. After several discussions, we decided to go ahead with the workshop despite the official closure of the Alaska SeaLife Center. Despite a small group size, our hearty participants spent the day listening to informative presentations and contributing to the project through the results of their engaged conversations.



Four miles north of Seward, the Resurrection River flows across the highway.

Huge dozers push rock debris out to the ocean to keep the river from damming up and flooding the area. We were watching this on our breaks during the workshop.



This is the back of the Alaska SeaLife Center. That's us at the workshop looking out of the large, brightly lit window!