

## **“Climate Change Communication and Social Change” Workshop**

### **Project Background and Justification**

While actions relevant to climate change are occurring at a variety of scales in the public and private sectors, evidence shows that traditional means of communicating climate science continue to be largely ineffective at reaching the broader public and stimulating behavioral/personal, organization/institutional change in the United States. Theorists on behavior change have long maintained and documented that effective communication is but the first step in moving people toward changing their actions and habits. The social/institutional context, personal relationships, incentives and disincentives, barriers to action, as well as positive feedback sustaining alternative behaviors are crucial to support acting on one’s values and beliefs. Understanding existing personal belief systems (“mental models”) and institutional modes of operation, priorities and limitations is therefore a crucial step toward improving how climate change information can be communicated, received and acted upon. Similarly, much progress has been made in recent years in understanding the motivating and constraining factors affecting organizational change. How more effective communication can lower the barriers to action for individuals, institutions, and organizations, and strengthen the motivation to act, however, remain open questions.

These broader perspectives open up many unanswered questions and a wide field for discussion – one that typically has not brought together experts in communication with those on environmental behavior change. We believe a dialogue among these experts is a logical and fruitful next step. Such discussion is likely to enhance one crucial area of the human dimensions of global change research agenda, but also generate practically useful ideas for communicators, advocates, policy-makers, and social change agents to promote needed action on behalf of climate variability and change.

Here at the Environmental and Societal Impacts Group of the National Center for Atmospheric Research in Boulder, CO, a small group of researchers interested in this interdisciplinary topic of communication and social (institutional/behavioral) change has recently formed to begin to explore the above-described conundrum.

With a small grant from the MacArthur Foundation we are in the fortunate position to bring together about 40 experts total (both researchers and practitioners) to address these issues in a workshop format.

This 3-day workshop will explore the communication/climate change interface with interested experts from a wide range of pertinent fields. As in any multi/interdisciplinary endeavor, no one knows it all, and we certainly don’t. This is why we hope to engage a number of participants from different fields, who may not have worked directly together before.

To kick off our research endeavor, we have assembled a high-power advisory committee (which is helping us shape a workshop and who have committed to writing chapters for

the edited volume we would like to produce. The workshop, and consequently the edited volume of papers will:

- take stock of what is known in pertinent fields and identify the connections between them;
- foster communication across the disciplinary, paradigmatic and academic/praxis lines that divide us so as to push forward the research in the most efficient and fruitful ways; and
- delineate the state-of-the-art from which we then can develop *both* a research and action agenda within the context of climate change.

### **What will the workshop focus on?**

Many areas of expertise and practical experience have potentially useful insights to bring to bear on the question of *how to improve climate change communication in a way that helps facilitate individual and organizational/institutional change toward more environmentally sustainable behavior*. For example, lessons learned from risk perception and communication studies could be applied more effectively to climate change communication. Similarly, insights gleaned from health behavior or social marketing studies could be applied more widely to facilitating social change and eliminating barriers to environment-friendly consumer behavior. Knowledge from common property regime studies and economics could fertilize social movement theories to better understand the opportunities for and obstacles to collective action. And practical lessons from working in the media, organizing in an advocacy group, or promoting change in industry could illustrate real-world challenges and success stories.

Communicating across the disciplinary boundaries or the lines separating academia and practice promises to help us see overlap and connections previously unknown. It also promises to identify knowledge gaps, research questions, and generate new ideas for practitioners on how to be more effective social change agents.

In the planning of this workshop we will identify key questions to be addressed during the workshop at this rich intersection of pertinent fields.

### **What are the goals of the workshop?**

The main goal of the workshop is to provide a forum for exchange and discussion among previously largely separate areas of expertise pertaining to climate change communication and social/behavior change. The ultimate outcomes of this event will be an edited volume of scientific/practitioner papers, a shorter synthesis paper, and clear research and action agendas. We would hope that you will consider playing a key role (through presentations and panel discussions) at the workshop itself, and contribute to the edited volume, and we will follow up with you on this separately. Cognizant of the situation and time pressures of many of the practitioner participants in this project, we would like to work creatively and cooperatively with them to ensure that their perspectives are fully included in the edited volume.

### **What is the workshop format?**

We have chosen a meeting format stretching over three days that gives participants

- a comfortable and beautiful environment that will encourage the flow of creative ideas and open exchange;
- enough time and opportunity to bring their expertise to bear on the key questions and to learn from each other;
- ample time for small-group, large-group, and informal discussion so that everyone is heard; and
- plenty of opportunities to get to know each other in a relaxed atmosphere, and hopefully to build lasting connections for joint future endeavors.

(See the rough workshop schedule below.)

### **Who will attend the workshop?**

The workshop will include about 40 participants, most of which come from U.S. institutions. The mix of participants will aim to balance a variety of disciplines, academics and practitioners, as well as senior and more junior experts.

The workshop will be chaired by Susi Moser and Lisa Dilling, and attended by a number of the other NCAR researchers interested in this topic.

We will post the list of participants who have accepted our invitation at the project website which is currently under development.

### **What are the benefits to you of participating?**

- Participation in stimulating discussions with the best thinkers and doers in their respective fields;
- Mutual exposure to knowledge that will leverage everyone's expertise and result in practical applications and actions;
- Development of new research ideas, a research agenda, and an action agenda that can lead to real change;
- New and renewed professional contacts, possibly leading to future collaborations;
- A rare occasion for academics and practitioners to exchange insights and connect around the pressing issue of climate change;
- If you so desire, a peer-reviewed publication in what is likely to become a seminal reference work on the communication/social change interface; and last but not least
- Spending three days in the beautiful environs of the Rocky Mountain foothills of Colorado.

### **More workshop logistics and details**

With the small grant we have, we are able to cover all your expenses for participating in this workshop (airfare, ground transportation, room and board), but unable to pay an honorarium for your time and input.

The workshop will be held in the Boulder, Colorado area. We ask participants to arrive by late afternoon on June 8th, so that we can begin the workshop informally with a joint dinner, begin to get to know each other, and be ready to dive into the subject matter the following morning.

The workshop will consist of short presentations of speakers (Advisory Committee members and others TBD) to lay out theoretical, empirical, and practical insights, followed by small-group discussions on vexing questions and problems. Each panel will consist of both academic and practitioner experts.

In the middle of the workshop, we anticipate including a half-day break to take advantage of the wonderful location where we'll be meeting. There will be opportunities to enjoy some hiking, or simply relax and have informal time together.

The very preliminary structure of the workshop is as follows:

	<b>June 8</b>	<b>June 9</b>	<b>June 10</b>	<b>June 11</b>
<b>Morning</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Welcome</li> <li>• Overview</li> <li>• Keynote Address – Setting the Stage</li> <li>• Discussion/ Charge</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Panel Talks on Key Question 3 &amp; 4 with break</li> <li>• Working Group Discussions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Panel discussion on emerging research and action agenda</li> <li>• Working Group Discussions develop further</li> </ul>
<b>Lunch</b>		Informal discussion	Informal discussion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Report back</li> <li>• Wrap-up</li> <li>• Next steps</li> <li>• Closing</li> </ul>
<b>Afternoon</b>	Arrival	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Panel Talks on Key Question 1 &amp; 2 with break</li> <li>• Working Group Discussions</li> </ul>	Free time	Departure after 2pm
<b>Evening</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Joint dinner</li> <li>• Informal time to get to know participants</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Report back</li> <li>• Climate Change Entertainment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Report back</li> <li>• Round-table discussion</li> </ul>	

A more detailed workshop schedule and logistical information will be sent to you upon acceptance of this invitation.

We are excited about this opportunity to establish new connections among various aspects of climate change, risk communication, behavior and organizational change, psychology, and other fields. We hope that you will be able to join us in shaping this into a path-breaking, relevant, and timely event for everyone involved.

**And who are we?**

**Susi Moser, Ph.D.**

Susi is a geographer by training (Ph.D. 1997, Clark University), whose research foci for the last ten years have been the human dimensions of global change. She has focused on uncertainties in the human dimensions (causes, impacts, and responses) of global change, especially focused on coastal areas. Susi then did a post-doc at Harvard's Kennedy

School of Government in the Global Environmental Assessment project, which examined the role and influence of science and assessments in policy- and decision-making. She also worked for the Heinz Center in Washington, DC on a congressionally mandated project on coastal erosion and management. From there, Susi went for four years to the Union of Concerned Scientists, where she was the staff scientist for climate change, managing climate change impacts projects and working in the trenches of effective climate change communication and social mobilization for change. Since September 2003 she is back in the world of research, but continuing in the same thematic vein: to find ways to bridge the science-lay public and science-policy gaps so as to better inform the public debate and action agenda on our common future.

**Lisa Dilling, Ph.D.**

Lisa is a biological oceanographer by training (Ph.D. 1997, University of California, Santa Barbara), and has wide-ranging interests in the area of carbon cycle and climate science. She has studied the carbon cycle in the ocean, as well as the implications of carbon cycle science for policy formulation. Lisa accepted a Knauss Sea Grant Fellowship to learn about climate policy directly in Washington, DC, and became interested in the application of research science results to better benefit society. She served for 5 years in the Office of Global Programs at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, where she directed carbon cycle science programs in the NOAA Climate and Global Change Program. While working at the national level, Lisa became increasingly interested to finding ways to bridge the science-society interface, or working to improve the connection of scientific research to societal needs. This interest brought her to the Environmental and Societal Impacts Group at the National Center for Atmospheric Research where she is now back on the research side of the issue, and working on application of carbon cycle science to policy issues in climate change.