

2012 Yeosu Workshop on “Public Perception of Climate Change”

by Catharina J.M. Philippart and Dohoon Kim

During the 2nd International Symposium on “Effects of Climate Change on the World’s Oceans” in Yeosu, Korea, the authors of this article convened a workshop on “Public perception on climate change”. This workshop started with three presentations and was followed by a discussion at which 13 persons participated, originating from Australia, France, Germany, Japan, the Netherlands, Korea, the UK and the USA.

Dr. Paul Buckley (Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science, UK) presented results of the EU project CLAMER (Climate Change and European Marine Ecosystem Research) which recently completed the first major poll to focus specifically on marine climate change. In total, some 10,000 European citizens from 10 different countries, spanning seas from the Arctic to the Mediterranean, took part in the poll (<http://www.clamer.eu/awareness>). Awareness and concern about marine climate change issues was set in the context of wider marine environmental issues (e.g., pollution, overfishing and habitat destruction) and country and demographic differences examined. With regard to marine environmental issues the public know and care about, it was pollution, a non-climate change issue that came out top, although a range of more “visible” climate change related issues (melting sea ice, sea level rise and flooding, erosion and extreme events) also scored highly (Fig. 1).



Fig 1 Results of an European survey on public perception on climate change to the open-ended question “When you are thinking about the coastline or the sea, what are the three most important environmental matters that come to mind?”

Dr. Tae-goun Kim (Korea Maritime University, Korea) shared his results with regard to the public perception of wetland restoration benefits in Louisiana, USA. In August 2005, a storm surge destroyed most of the levees of New Orleans (Louisiana) resulting in flooding of most parts of the city. This worst engineering disaster in the history of the USA prompted a scientific debate on the possible benefits of wetland restoration for reducing the impacts of such a storm surge. Results of a referendum-style contingent-valuation survey indicated that the public perceives both a strong relationship between increased wetland loss and increased storm risk and a substantial likelihood of increased storm-protection benefits from wetland restoration. However, respondents expressed that they were less likely to believe the improved storm reduction benefits from restoration when they perceived a high frequency of severe storms. Hurricane protection benefits were the most important factor explaining a willingness to pay for wetland restoration to prevent expected future land losses in coastal Louisiana.

Dr. Mitsutaku Makino (Fisheries Research Agency, Japan) presented Japanese examples of outreach and adaptation strategies for climate change at three different scales. He first introduced a national campaign aimed at the general public, called “Challenge 25” that aims at a reduction of CO₂ emissions by 25% by the year 2020. This campaign promotes 25 easily understandable and easy to do activities in everyday life by which the public can help to reach this goal. The second example addressed the recovery of infrastructure after the Great Eastern Japan Earthquake in March 2011, which destroyed or severely damaged many coastal communities and fisheries industries. The Local Recovery Plans against the Earthquake, part of the National Strategy for the Recovery, advocate for the development of alternative energy industries. For example, Ishinomaki-city announced a plan to build a Smart Community, i.e., a “safe, secure and eco-friendly town” with energy self-support by introducing various alternative energy generators.



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