

ACCO Climate Leadership Summit

November 8-9, 2010 | Hyattsville, Maryland

Marriott Inn & Conference Center, University of Maryland University College  
(The nation's first LEED certified conference center)

## **ROUNDTABLE NOTES**

### **Track 2: Adaptation**

#### **Session 1: Communicating Science and Climate Impacts**

Moderators: Brad May, Tom Peterson, John Englander, Sylvia Earle

#### **Takeaways:**

Communication is key in conveying the importance of climate change, and it is important that we recognize the varying audiences (individuals, communities, corporations, policy and decision makers) and the varying arenas in which these communications take place. Being clear about the solution is how people understand. Make sure that people understand that there IS a problem. Film, social media, books, talks, whatever it takes. Also, 2100 is too distant for relevance, 2050 is close enough to have relevance, and far enough that you can paint a picture of dramatic change from the present. Also, it is imperative that stated facts be reasonably consistent so as not to add to the confusion.

We need to find the balance between "scare tactics" to overcome the tendency to avoid dealing with the issue, and hopeful things we can do now that will make a difference (e.g. talking about adaptation such as sea level rise, can be a path to get people to seriously consider mitigation).

Somehow we have to get people to realize that recycling trash and changing lightbulbs can not solve this problem, and that the plight of the polar bear, however charismatic, does not describe our stake in this issue.

Using ENVIRONMENTAL, SUSTAINABLE, and GREEN interchangeably with CLIMATE CHANGE adds to the confusion. Climate Change is a specific life threatening issue that hinges on one phenomenon, greenhouse gases, notably CO2 emissions. Those other 3 terms, while related in some cases, connote many other things and add to the confusion.

If people don't know there is a problem, they won't buy into the solution.

People need to realize that climate change is a problem, but too complex of an explanation can be harmful. Information is often confusing, this is a complex problem, until we can keep this simple so that people can understand, we are going to face serious road blocks.

Different messages need to be developed for different people, as well as different levels of conveying that message.

Get people to talk to one another about climate change and cater information about climate change to the audience. Much more work is needed in the arena of adaptation, and time should be spent to address points. It may be that the focus should shift from adaptation (which is certain, humans will adapt- in some form or another- to climate change) to mitigation. Mitigation often takes place too late, and so perhaps we should change the focus to mitigating the causes rather than adapting to the effects.

## Next Steps:

Establish working group that focuses on best practices involving:

- ***Consistent and clear communication:*** One voice from the scientific community focusing on ensuring consistency in messaging.
- ***Making it real:*** When talking about adaptation, we should focus on timeframes that people can relate to (within their lifetime) rather than 2100 or 2150, when it is unlikely that they will care.
- ***Connecting the dots:*** Bring the message home so that people begin to relate to the problem and are able to identify areas in their lives where they can easily contribute to a solution.
- ***Invoking emotion:*** Leave the world better than you found it.