



# Changing the Subject on Climate Change

*2020 Massachusetts Land Conservation  
Conference*



**WATER WORDS  
THAT WORK**

# Agenda

- **Introductions & Acknowledgements**
- Project Background
- Research Highlights
  - Literature Review
  - Land Trust Supporter Survey
  - The Bottom Line
- Resources for You
- Q&A

# Introductions



**Kelly Watkinson**  
Land Trust Alliance



**Eric Eckl**  
Water Words That Work, LLC

# Acknowledgements

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**OPEN SPACE  
INSTITUTE**



**DORIS DUKE  
CHARITABLE FOUNDATION**

# The Land Trust Alliance

Founded in 1982, the Land Trust Alliance is a national nonprofit conservation organization that helps land trusts work faster, better and stronger.

Our nation's land trusts, together, have conserved over 56 million acres of land. The Land Trust Alliance represents 1,000 nonprofits and their 4.6 million supporters, 207,000 volunteers and more than 6.2 million annual preserve visitors.

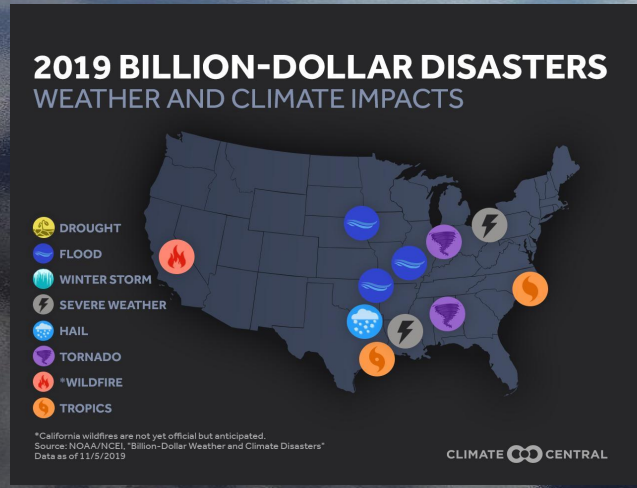


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# Climate Change is here

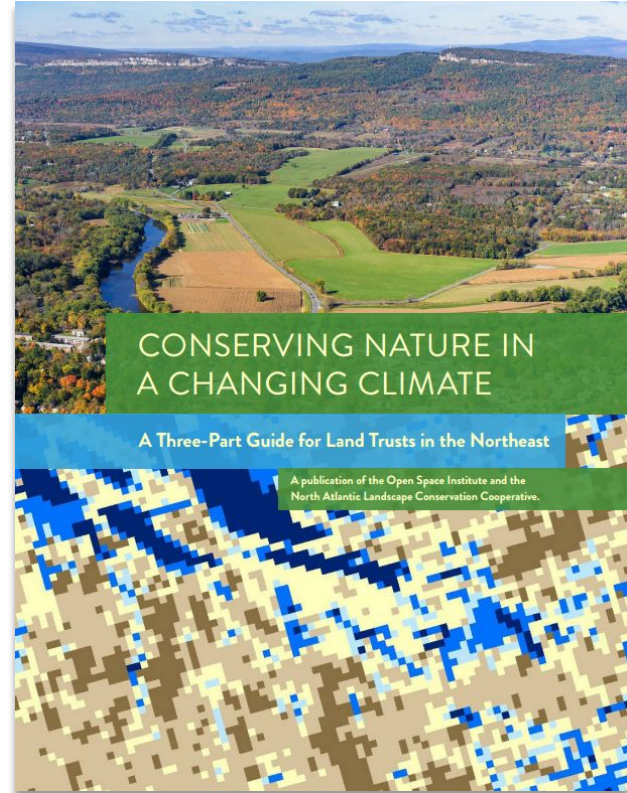
It is already impacting local communities and the work that land trusts do.



# Land and Climate Program Goals

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1. Increase the number of land trusts equipped with strategic conservation plans that address climate impacts and promote climate resilience.
2. Advance the use of land through restoration, protection and management to maximize nature's ability to keep greenhouse gases out of the atmosphere.
3. Empower land trusts to facilitate the buildout of renewable energy facilities, all while steering such facilities away from sensitive lands.





# Land Trusts in Action





## Climate Leadership in New Hampshire

- Innovative carbon offset project
- Planning for climate resilience





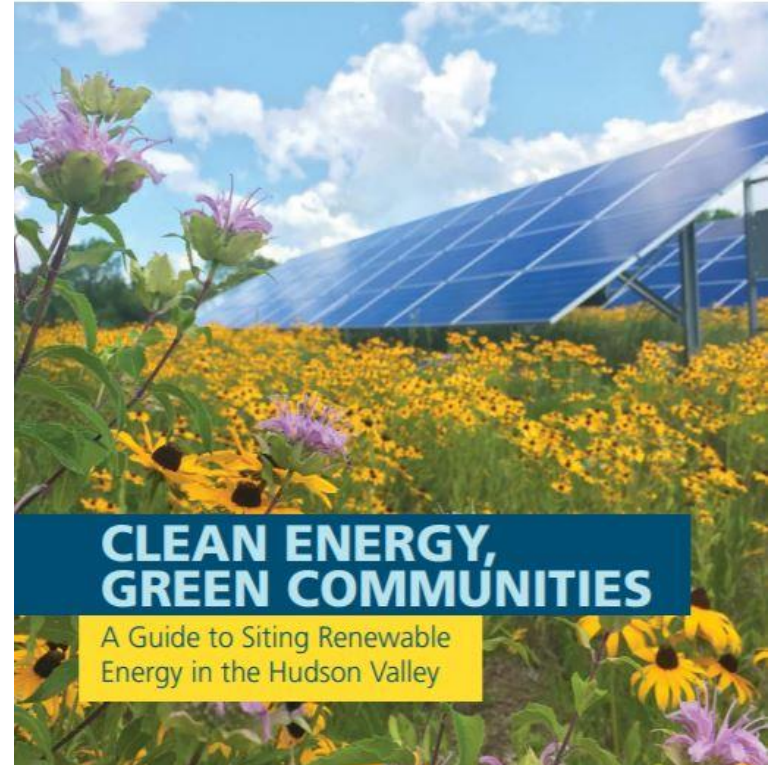
# NORTHWEST ARKANSAS LAND TRUST

- Climate education & outreach
- Climate communication
- Planning for climate resilience





- Renewable Energy
- Planning for climate resilience
- Planning for sea level rise and marsh migration



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**Most Americans accept that climate change is real, and arguing with hardened deniers is futile.**

Successful climate communication emphasizes local consequences and solutions.

Most Americans accept that climate change is real, and arguing with hardened deniers is futile. **Successful climate communication emphasizes local consequences and solutions.**

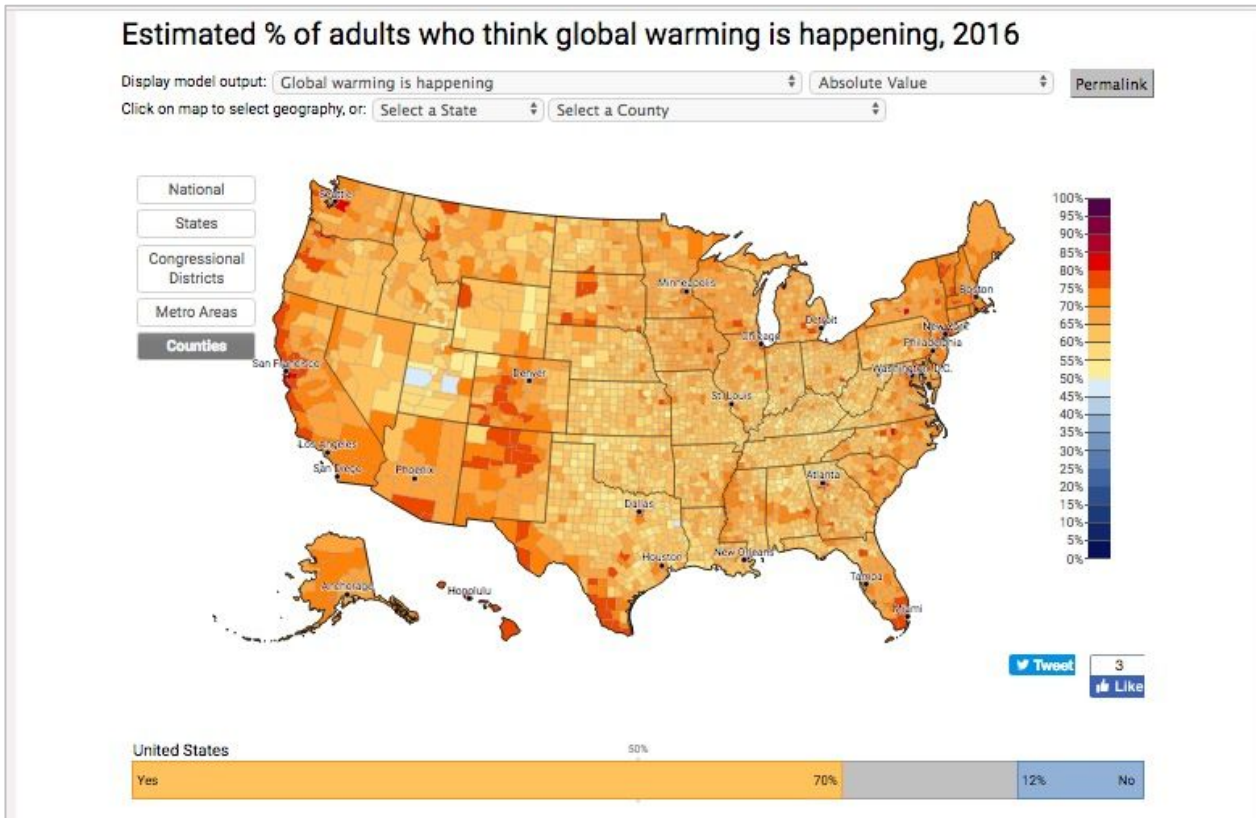
Write down your guess...

What % of people in your state believe  
the global warming is real?

What % believe it is caused by humans?



# Research Highlights



<http://bit.ly/pew-global>

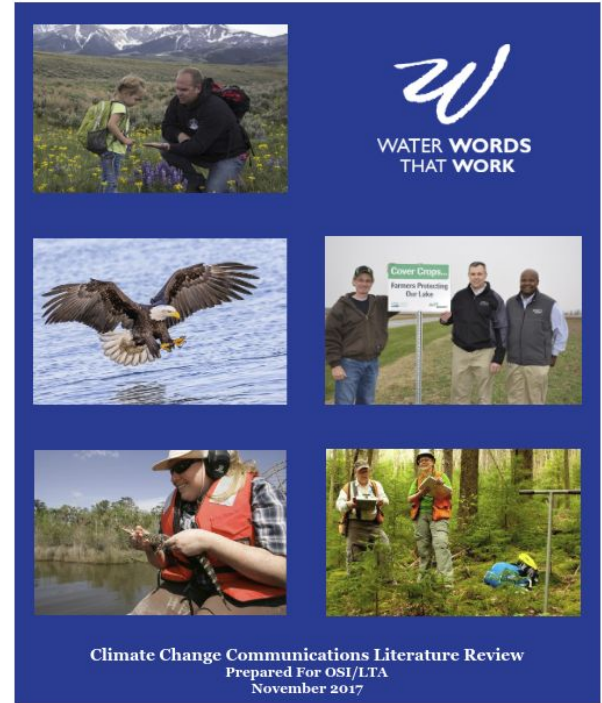
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Nationwide, 70% believe it is happening.  
53% believe it is caused by humans.

Local geographic variations are much  
smaller than you would expect.

# Literature Review Highlights



November 2017  
A 36 page literature review

# Literature Review Highlights

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The top findings in the literature review were:

- Most Americans believe that global warming is occurring, is caused by humans, and could be addressed -- but they lack a sense of urgency and are reluctant to act
- A minority of Americans believe that global warming is a hoax, but they are vocal and highly motivated to stop efforts to deal with it
- The messages that resonate with conservative Americans are also persuasive to liberals, but the reverse is not true
- Local land trusts may be particularly influential in converting climate skeptics

# Literature Review Highlights

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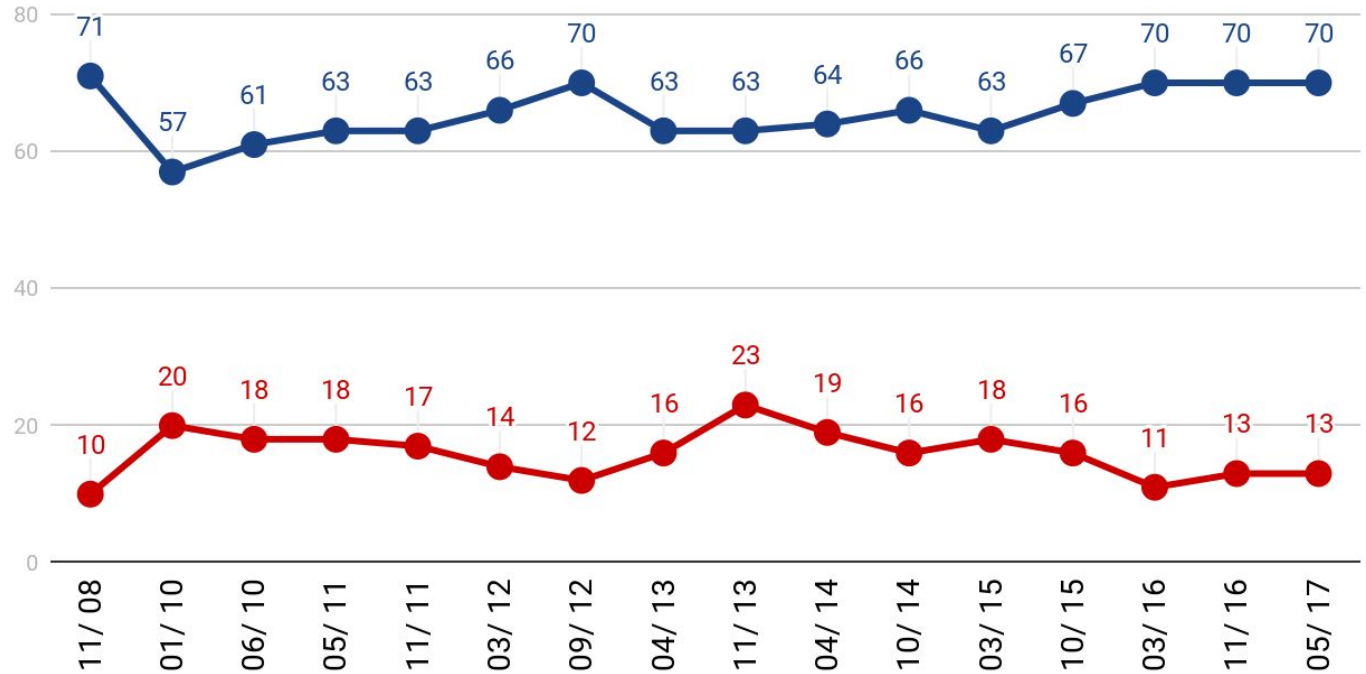
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# Literature Review Highlights



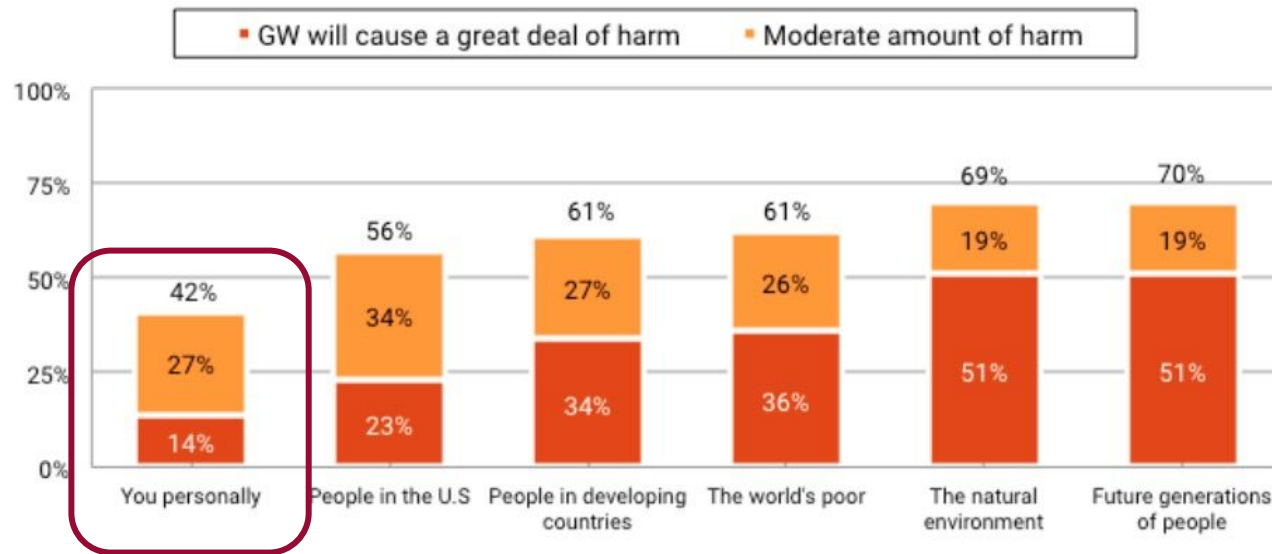
Yale Program on Climate Change: Do you think global warming is happening?



Remarkably  
Stable

# Literature Review Highlights

## Most Americans Think Global Warming Is a Relatively Distant Threat

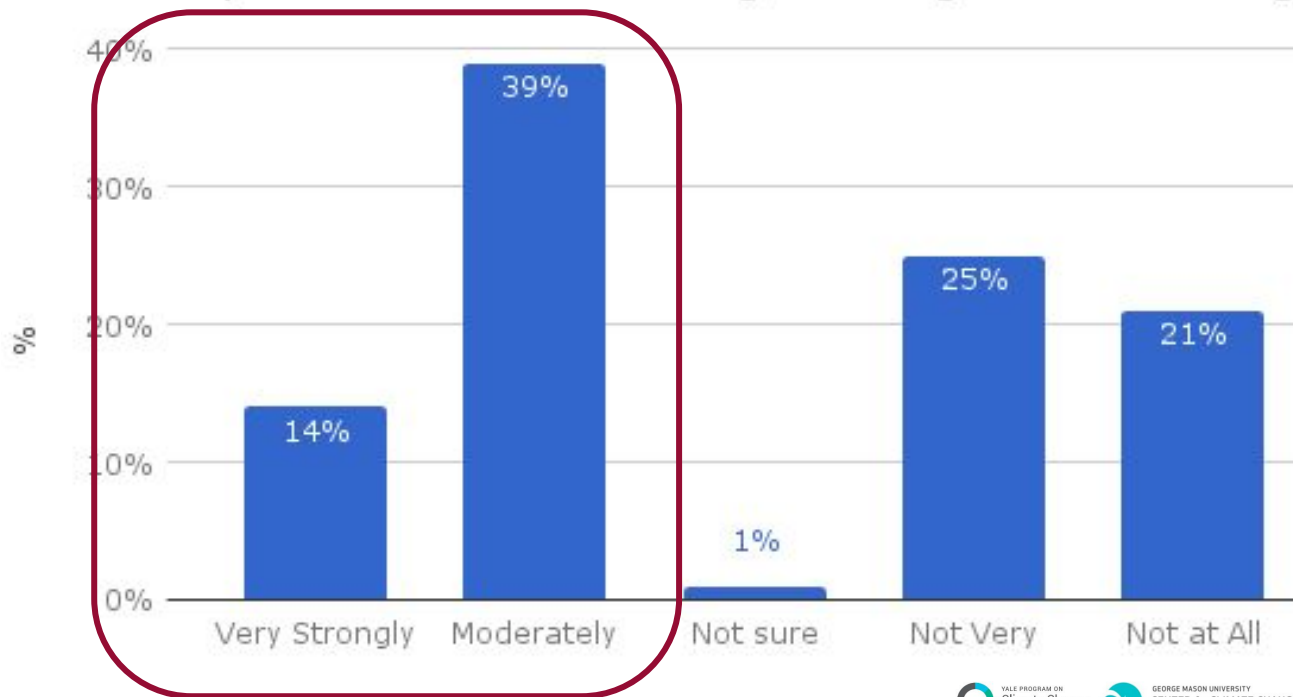


Only a **minority** feels climate change will affect them personally



# Literature Review Highlights

## Feel "Helpless" to do something about global warming

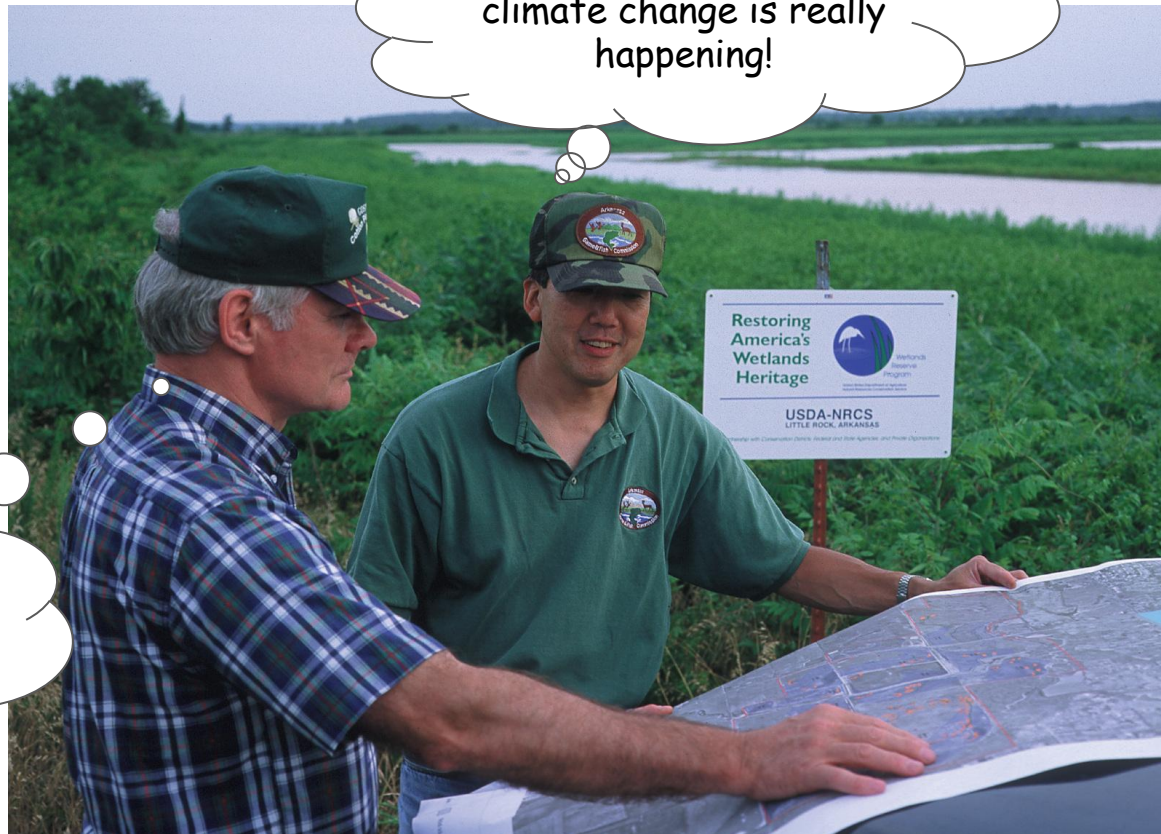


A **majority** feel **"helpless"** to do anything about it

# Literature Review Highlights

I need to convince him  
climate change is really  
happening!

He has to convince me  
climate change will  
affect me, and there's  
something I can do  
about it



# Literature Review Highlights

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# Literature Review Highlights



**A**larmed



**C**oncerned



**C**autious



**D**isengaged



**D**oubtful



**D**ismissive

# Literature Review Highlights

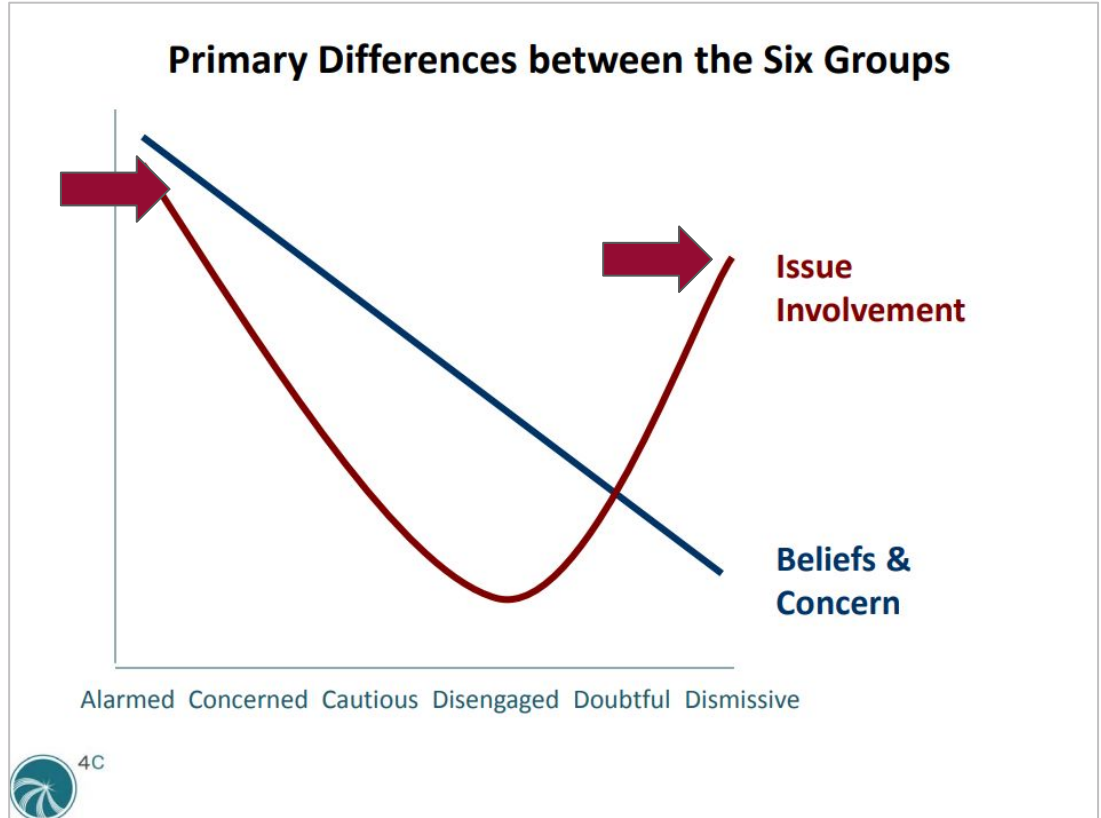
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- **The “Dismissive” make up about 10% of the U.S. population.**
- This group tends to be very conservative white men with high education and income.
- This group is civically active, and may be evangelical Christians. They prioritize the economy over the environment.
- This group consumes a specialized media diet of conservative commentary.

# Literature Review Highlights

The “Dismissive” display low belief and concern, but high levels of involvement



# Literature Review Highlights

 **Media Research Center** 16 mins Like Page


It is so decreed! The NY Times wants YOU to lose your mind over climate change.  
And like a mindless automaton, they expect you to obey.



NEWSBUSTERS.ORG  
**NYT Reporter Demands You Become 'Hysterical' About Climate Change**

63 23 Comments 5 Shares


Like Comment Share

 **BREITBART**

TRENDING: CORONAVIRUS UPDATES SOCIALIST SANDERS BUTTIGIEG OUT ISRAELI ELECTION E.U. MIGRANT CRISIS 2.0?

## REMEMBERING CLIMATE ALARMISTS' FALSE PROPHECIES

676 EMAIL SHARE TWEET




AP Photo/Pablo Martinez Monsivais

by THOMAS D. WILLIAMS, PH.D. | 12 Feb 2020 | 375

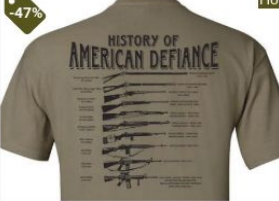
LISTEN TO STORY 3:11

-42%




Hot

-47%



Hot

-47%



A HISTORY OF DEFIANCE

# Literature Review Highlights

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- A minority of Americans believe that global warming is a hoax, but they are vocal and highly motivated to stop efforts to deal with it
- **The messages that resonate with conservative Americans are also persuasive to liberals, but the reverse is not true**
- Local land trusts may be particularly influential in converting climate skeptics



# Literature Review Highlights



Military, law enforcement, firefighters, patriotic symbols, churches active in the community

# Literature Review Highlights



## Exercise #5: The Climate Words That Work

When explaining an environmental issue...

- Protect our community/your property
- Control pollution/pests
- Prepare for floods and droughts
- Conserve wildlife

When addressing the "so what" question...

- Future generations
- Healthy
- Family/children
- Safe
- Trends

When encouraging somebody to do something...

- Make a Difference
- Doing my/your/their part
- It affects you
- What you can do
- Working together
- Save Money

When asking somebody to take your side...

- Accountability
- Corporations (evokes negative feelings)/Businesses (evokes positive feelings)
- Choice
- Fair
- Balance
- Planning Ahead
- Responsibility/duty
- Freedom
- Investment
- Law
- American tradition/patriotic

The "Water Words That Work"

# Literature Review Highlights



- Protect
- Family/children
- Safe
- Choice
- Fair
- Balance
- **Property**
- Duty
- Freedom
- Investment
- Law
- **American tradition/patriotic**

# Literature Review Highlights

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- **Local land trusts may be particularly influential in converting climate skeptics**

Most Americans accept that climate change is real, and arguing with hardened deniers is futile. **Successful climate communication emphasizes local consequences and solutions.**

# Literature Review Highlights

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Land trusts are positioned to gather local stories to inspire action and convince skeptics.

- Pictures of **local** impacts
- Stories of **local** people affected by climate change, and people making a difference locally

These things factor favorably into converting climate skeptics and encouraging supporters to take action.

# Literature Review Highlights



Local Consequences

# Literature Review Highlights



Local Consequences



# Literature Review Highlights

More Likely to Prompt a Defensive Reaction



Less Likely to Prompt a Defensive Reaction



Local Solutions

# Literature Review Highlights

Close ups show how it's done



Photos at scale show how it matters



Local Solutions

# Literature Review Highlights



Local  
Solutions

# Literature Review Highlights



“...The [survey] results suggest that the public responds to global warming and climate change in a similar fashion.”

## *Perceived Seriousness of Global Warming vs. Climate Change -- by Political Ideology*

Turning now to the environment, in your view, is the issue of [global warming/climate change] -- a crisis, a major problem that will become a crisis if it is not adequately addressed, a problem, but not likely to become a crisis, or not a real problem?

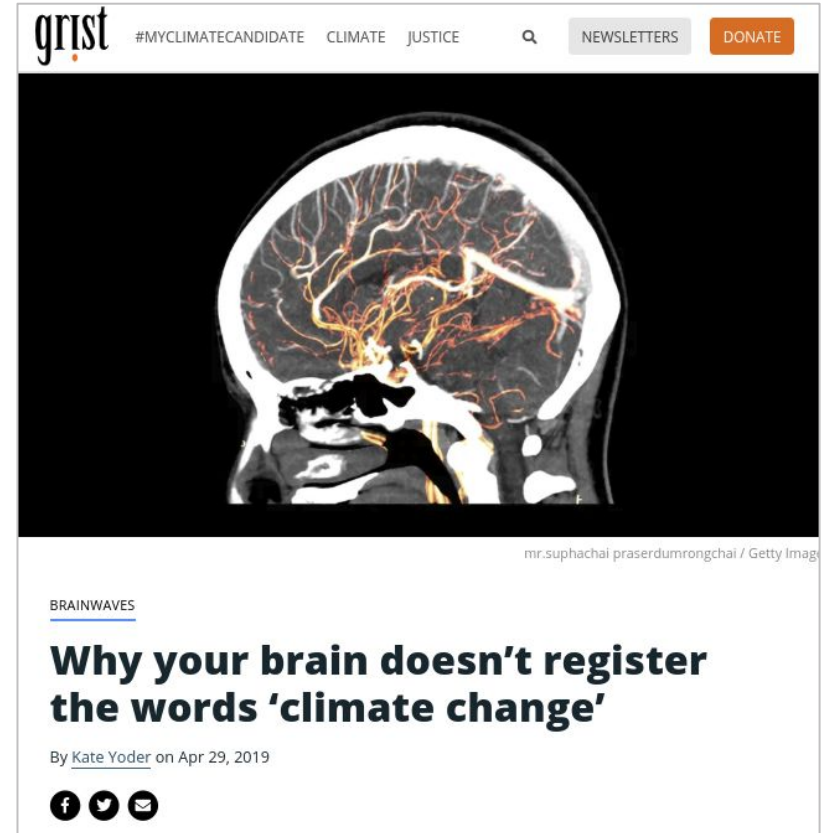
	<b>Conservatives</b>	<b>Moderates</b>	<b>Liberals</b>
	%	%	%
<b>GLOBAL WARMING (Form A)</b>			
A crisis	7	15	29
A major problem -- could become a crisis	24	44	44
A problem -- not likely to become a crisis	15	19	12
Not a real problem	49	20	13
<b>CLIMATE CHANGE (Form B)</b>			
A crisis	6	13	25
A major problem -- could become a crisis	23	42	48
A problem -- not likely to become a crisis	19	19	9
Not a real problem	49	24	14
<b>TOTAL CRISIS/MAJOR PROBLEM</b>			
Global warming	31	59	73
Climate change	29	55	73

April 10-15, 2014

GALLUP®

# Literature Review Highlights

If you want to get people to care, try “climate crisis,” suggests [new research](#) from an advertising consulting agency in New York. That phrase got a 60 percent greater emotional response from listeners than our old pal “climate change.”



The screenshot shows the Grist website interface. At the top left is the 'grist' logo. To its right are navigation links: '#MYCLIMATECANDIDATE', 'CLIMATE', and 'JUSTICE'. Further right is a search icon and a 'NEWSLETTERS' button. On the far right is an orange 'DONATE' button. The main content area features a large image of a human head in profile, with a 3D visualization of the brain's neural network in orange and red. Below the image is the text 'mr.suphachai praserdumrongchai / Getty Images'. Underneath the image is the category 'BRAINWAVES' with a blue underline. The article title is 'Why your brain doesn't register the words 'climate change'' in bold black text. Below the title is the byline 'By Kate Yoder on Apr 29, 2019'. At the bottom of the article preview are three social media icons: Facebook, Twitter, and Email.

We tested  
"resilience" with  
20+ focus groups  
and it evokes  
confusion or is  
counterproductive

Dump  
"resilience" and  
other confusing  
terms

Lori Weigel

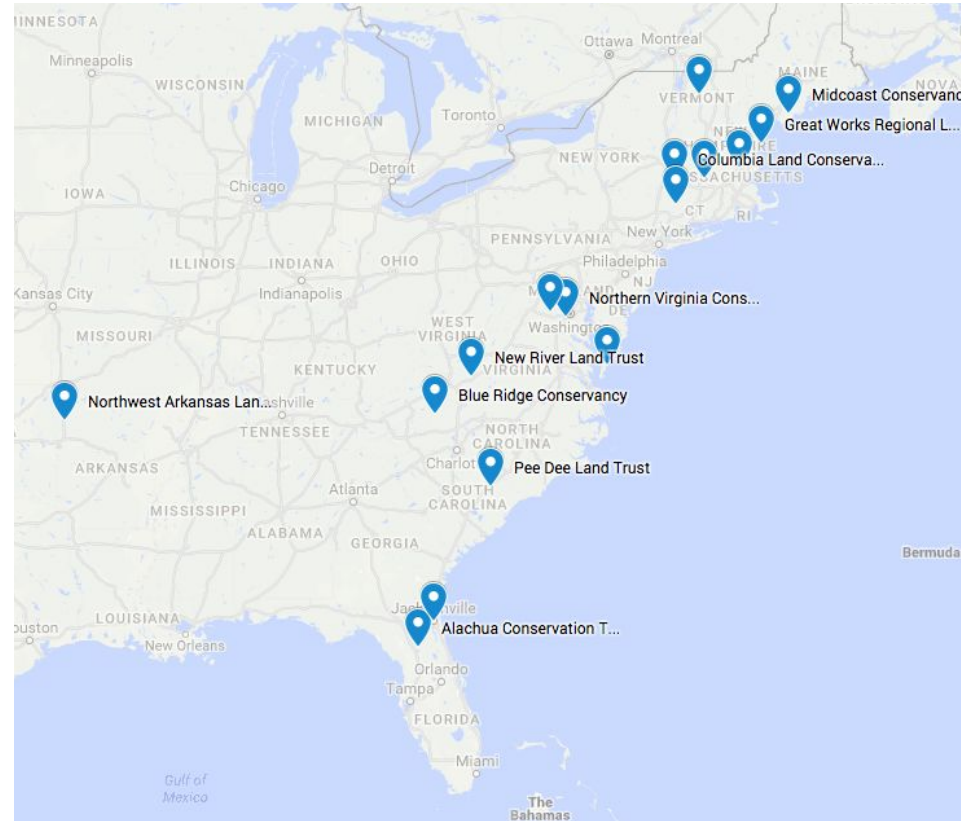
Pollster and Co-author "The Language of Conservation"



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# Land Trust Supporter Survey



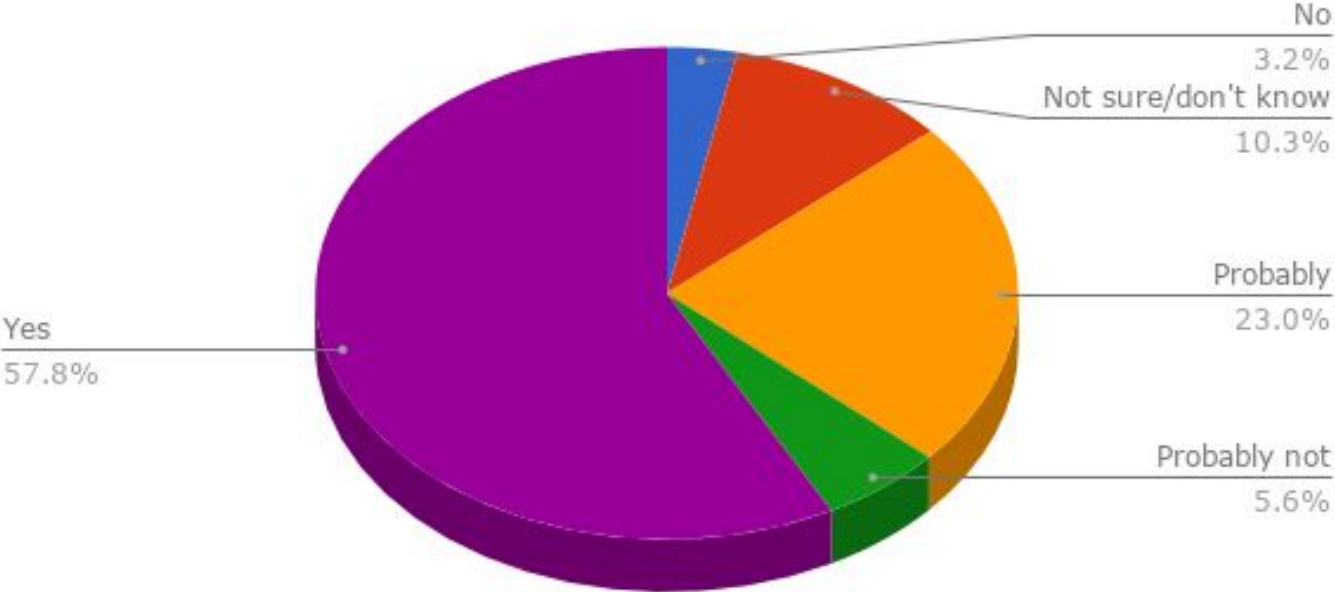
In 2017, 16 Land Trusts sent an email survey to their lists, and we collected 1,282 responses!



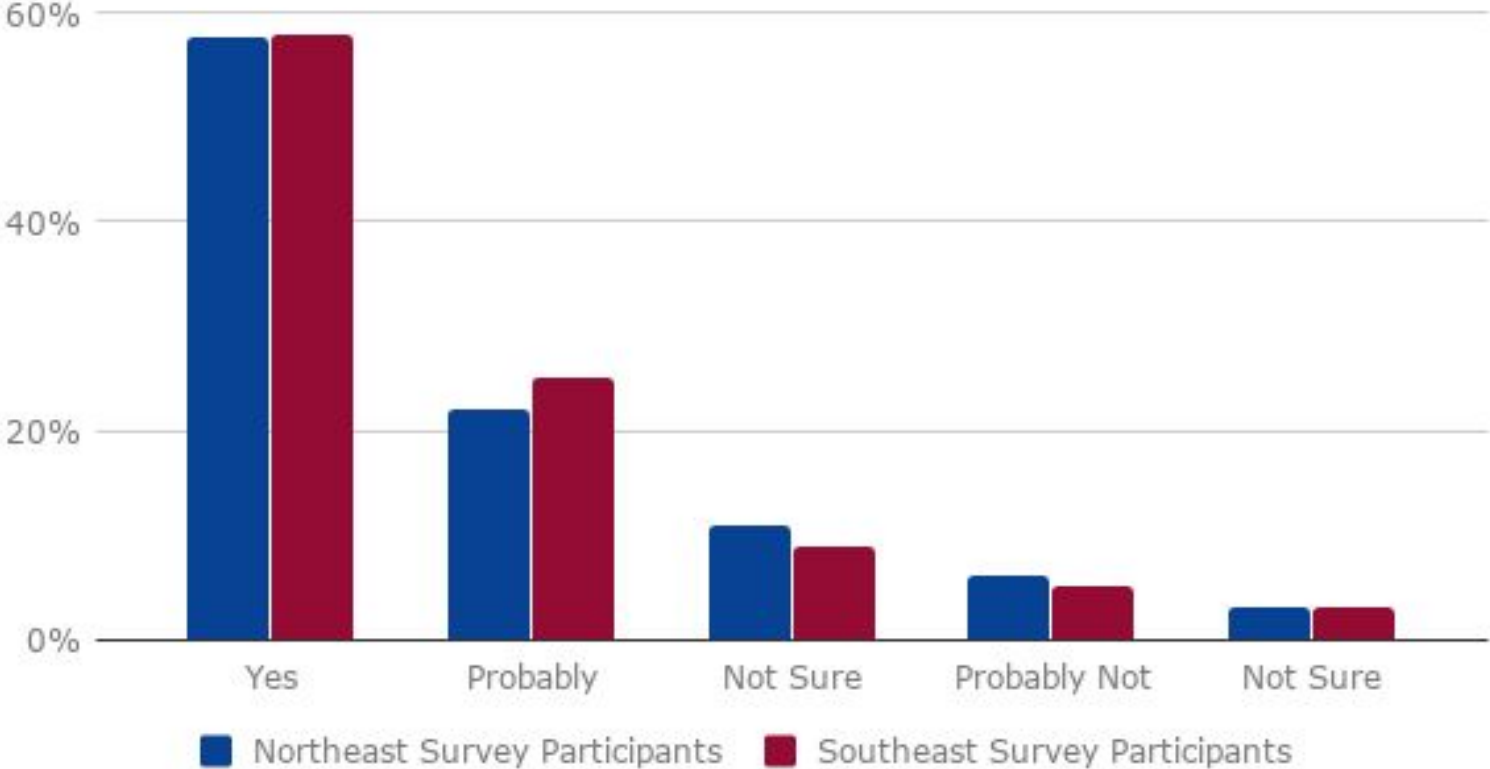
# Land Trust Supporter Survey



Should land trusts talk about climate change?



# Land Trust Supporters & Climate Change



# Land Trust Supporter Survey

Only 6% and 8% of land trust supporters gave climate messages the lowest possible rating — roughly the same % that Yale labels as “dismissive”





# Land Trust Supporter Survey



## Topic they want to hear about from Land Trusts, ranked:

1. How the land trust helps preserve the scenery and character of the area
2. How the land trust's work benefits local wildlife
3. How the land trust puts your donations to work
4. How the land trust provides recreational access in the area
5. How the land trust helps bring the community together
- 6. How the land trust helps the area prepare for a changing climate**
7. How the land trust supports the local economy
8. How the land trust helps families preserve their heritage
9. Estate planning tips

## Reasons to protect their land, ranked:

1. Preserve scenery and rural character
2. Protect wildlife habitat
3. Right thing to do
4. Prevent development
- 5. Protect the local environment from climate change**
6. My legacy in my community
7. Keep the land in the family
8. Financial benefit

# Land Trust Supporter Survey



Reasons to **donate money to a Land Trust**, ranked:

1. Preserve scenery and rural character
2. Protect wildlife habitat
3. Right thing to do
- 4. Protect the local environment from climate change**
5. My legacy in my community
6. The land trust asked
7. Public acknowledgement of donation

Reasons to **volunteer for a Land Trust**, ranked:

1. Enjoyable experience
2. Preserve scenery and rural character
3. Protect wildlife habitat
4. Feeling of making a difference
5. Right thing to do
- 6. Protect the local environment from climate change**
7. Make new friends

Land trust supporters are *receptive* for you to lead them towards action on climate change, but they are not expecting it or *demanding* it!

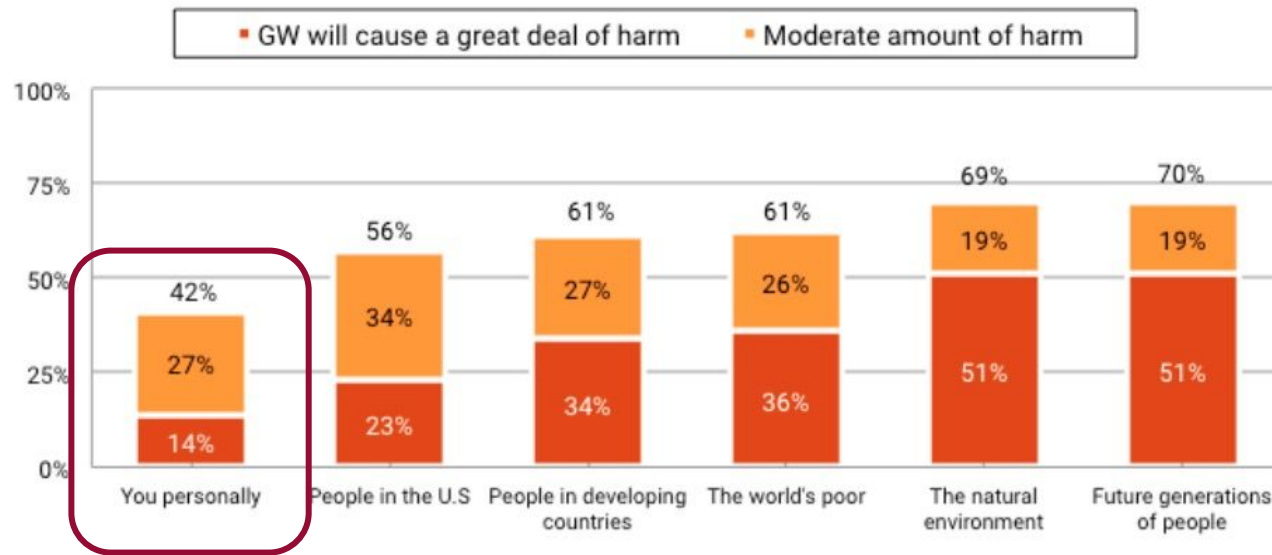
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# Literature Review Highlights

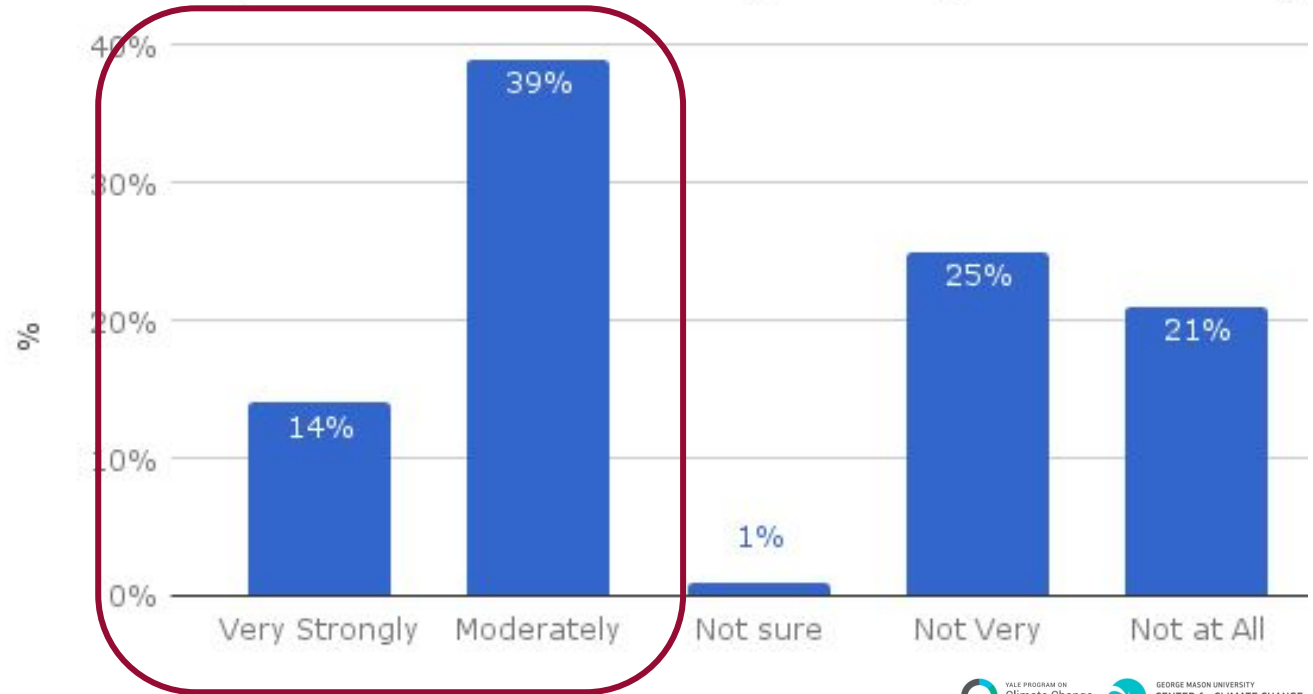
## Most Americans Think Global Warming Is a Relatively Distant Threat



Only a **minority** feels climate change will affect them personally

# Literature Review Highlights

## Feel "Helpless" to do something about global warming



A **majority** feel **"helpless"** to do anything about it

# Literature Review Highlights

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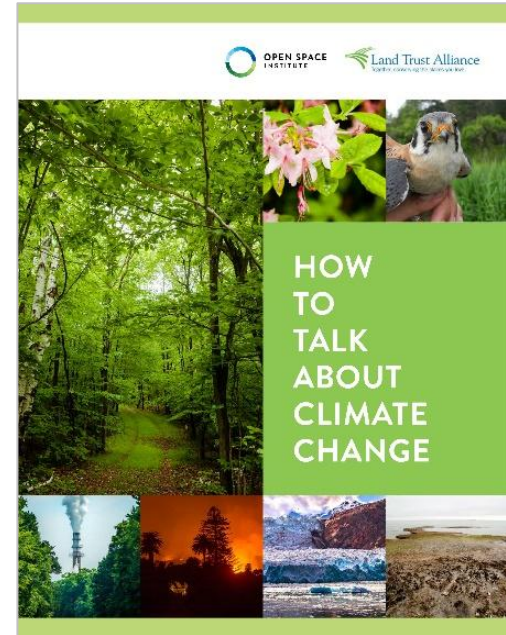
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# Conservation in a Changing Climate



[Get Started](#) [Build Resilience](#) [Natural Climate Solutions](#) [Renewable Energy](#) [Communications](#) [Case Studies](#) [About](#)

This site is intended to offer basic to intermediate-level guidance about climate change and conservation responses to the U.S. conservation community. Not sure where to get started? Read the [introduction to getting started](#), take a [self-assessment](#), or [search key terms](#).





## Browse By Region



## Browse By Land Type

[Coastal Lands](#)

[Designated Areas](#)

[Forest Lands](#)

[Grasslands, Shrublands, Savannas, and Deserts](#)

[Water Resources](#)

[Working Lands](#)





## Case Study Categories

[Adaptation](#)

[Carbon Finance](#)

[Education and Outreach](#)

[Mitigation](#)

## Browse By Impact

[Changing Ocean Systems](#)

[Changing Water Regimes](#)

[Impacts to Species and Habitats](#)

[Changing Temperatures](#)

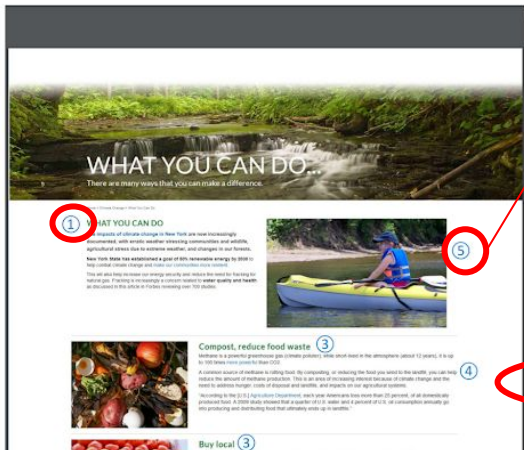


## Tug Hill Tomorrow – Communication Product Analysis Case Study



This communications example from Tug Hill Tomorrow highlights some best practices in climate communications, including “recommendation 3 – focus on local climate change impacts and responses, rather than on causes”, and “recommendation 5 – select photos that bring your message to life.” Recommendations are posted in the side-bar for easy reference. [Click here to view the full PDF.](#) You can read additional analysis below the displayed product.

The example below highlights some best practices in climate communications. Recommendations are posted in the side-bar for easy reference. [Click here to view the full PDF.](#) You can read additional analysis below the displayed product.



### At a Glance

Land trust: Tug Hill Tomorrow

Product type: Web page

Target audience: Resident of service area

Focal conservation strategy: Education

**Why it stands out:** These complementary web pages model how to bring the overwhelming topic of climate change into focus for readers by connecting it to the work of their local land trust and presenting it through the lens of local impacts, resources, responses, and opportunities to act. Readers are presented with a visual menu of actions, almost all of which are illustrated with a solution-based image.



### Communications Recommendations

Key recommendations for climate communication

## Product Analysis

How this product showcases the recommendations:

**1. Leading with politically neutral messages about conserving resources people already care about.**

The “What You Can Do” page immediately makes climate change relevant and accessible for readers by identifying known impacts in New York state — stress to communities, wildlife, agriculture, and forests — and providing an existing target as a starting place for shared action: New York State has established a goal of 50 percent renewable energy by 2030. Individuals can contribute to that goal by taking action on their own property, or by supporting Tug Hill, which we learn on the complementary “What We Are Doing” page structures its conservation agreements to allow for renewable energy installation where appropriate.

**2. Finding trusted spokespeople to deliver your messages.**

While no individuals are quoted in the text, the “What You Can Do” page offers readers credible touchstones for information and resources, such as the New York State Energy Research and Development Agency, and ends with a list of “reliable sources” curated to appeal to different audiences. Number one is Cornell University, a respected New York institution, followed by Katharine Hayhoe, a respected climate scientist whose evangelical Christian roots may garner more trust for local faith communities.

Throughout the page, there is a consistent message: This is what credible sources are saying, and this is how it applies in your community.

**3. Focusing on local climate-change impacts and responses, rather than on the causes.**

The “What You Can Do” page brings climate change home by providing information and local context for a list of six different ways individuals can help address climate change. This list is organized with clear headings, illustrated with high-quality images, and offers a low-stakes point of entry, beginning with a measure anyone can take in their own home — composting and reducing food waste — and ending by making the case for supporting local land conservation.

On the complementary “What We Are Doing” page, the land trust leads by example, showing steps it is already taking to help address climate change in the region through a suite of initiatives designed to resonate with different audiences: long-term land protection, working with landowners, protecting wildlife corridors, creating trails, and more.

**4. Avoiding technical jargon, instead using language that can be understood by anyone.**

The “What You Can Do” page offers bite-sized chunks of climate change science in each section, and breaks them down into digestible takeaways for readers. For example, the section on composting begins by explaining why methane is a “climate polluter”, and connects the dots between methane, food waste, and composting.

In addition to introducing each topic clearly and concisely, the authors provide readers with

**4. Avoiding technical jargon, instead using language that can be understood by anyone.**

**5. Selecting photos that bring your messages to life.**



### Case Study Categories

Adaptation

Carbon Finance

Education and Outreach

Mitigation

### Browse By Region





# Inventory of Climate Communication Products

[Home](#) » Inventory of Climate Communication Products

## Inventory of Climate Communication Products

<u>Product type</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Land Trust</u>	<u>Primary target audience</u>	<u>Primary strategy</u>	<u>Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level</u>
Brochure	<a href="#">Connecting Habitat and Neighbors</a>	Vermont Land Trust	Members	Green infrastructure and nature-based solutions	9th
Annual report	<a href="#">2017 Annual Report</a>	Scenic Hudson	Members	Conservation Restriction (CR) or Conservation Easement (CE)	College
Annual report	<a href="#">Applying Science to Conservation</a>	Vermont Land Trust	Members	Conservation design	College
Annual report	<a href="#">Climate Change and the Next Seven Generations</a>	Otsego Land Trust	Members	Conservation Restriction (CR) or Conservation Easement (CE)	College
Case study	<a href="#">Incorporating climate resiliency into conservation efforts at an eight-town regional scale: Mt. Agamenticus to the Sea Conservation Initiative Case Study</a>	Mt. Agamenticus to the Sea Conservation Initiative	Conservation practitioners/peers	Conservation design	College
Fundraising materials	<a href="#">Marshes for Tomorrow Initiative</a>	Maine Coast Heritage Land Trust	Donor	Land acquisition	College

## Changing the Subject on Climate Training (3 90-minute sessions)

Conservation organizations are increasingly weaving climate science into their efforts to protect land and water. In this training, we will explore concepts, strategies, and tips for weaving climate topics into your communications.

**Part 1. Who Responds to What Message.** In this session, you will explore climate change knowledge, attitudes, and beliefs in America. You will discover how your stakeholders fit into that picture and how to deliver messages that work for them.

**Part 2: Tailoring Messages to Your Audience.** We will learn to create messages for "the alarmed" and the "doubtful," and who the public does and doesn't trust on this topic.

**Part 3. Keeping Your Eye on the Ball.** Explore some pro techniques for keeping your workgroup focused and your climate messages clear and compelling.

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# Questions?

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## **Kelly Watkinson**

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