

# TALKING ABOUT CLIMATE CHANGE



# THINGS WE ALL DO AS PROFESSIONALS

- Help our co-workers, clients, and stakeholders make informed decisions
- Provide (& disclose) appropriate information
- Manage expectations

**Increasingly, forestry professionals are expected to integrate climate change into plans, documents, and activities.**

- **Client questions and concerns**
- **Stakeholder-driven concerns on public lands**
- **More prescriptive agency policies & guidance**
- **Forest certification**
- **Long-term economic forecasts**

Increasingly, forestry professionals are expected to integrate climate change into plans, documents, and activities.

Regardless of whether initiated by a professional or outside entity, there is a greater need to understand and communicate information about climate change to diverse audiences.

**TALKING ABOUT CLIMATE CHANGE IS TRICKY**

# TALKING ABOUT CLIMATE CHANGE IS TRICKY

- 1) Seen as politically contentious even though scientifically accepted

**97 out of 100 climate experts agree humans are causing global warming**



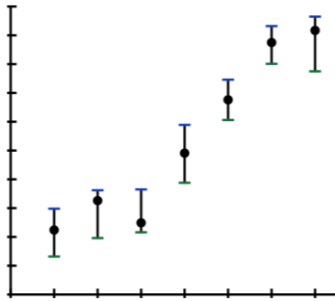
# TALKING ABOUT CLIMATE CHANGE IS TRICKY

- 2) **Uncertainty** makes it difficult to talk about future conditions and suggest interventions

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Among scientists:  
**Variation in the data**



Among the public:  
**Scientists have no idea**

?





# TALKING ABOUT CLIMATE CHANGE IS TRICKY

- 2) **Uncertainty** makes it difficult to talk about future conditions and suggest interventions

## Uncertainty in everyday life:

Extended Forecast for  
Houghton MI

This  
Afternoon



Partly Sunny

High: 37 °F

Tonight



Partly Cloudy

Low: 24 °F

Friday



Sunny

High: 55 °F

Friday  
Night



Clear

Low: 41 °F

Saturday



Sunny

High: 56 °F

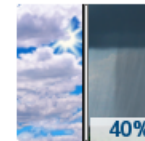
Saturday  
Night



Partly Cloudy

Low: 36 °F

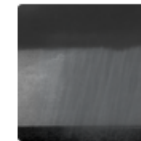
Sunday



Mostly Cloudy  
then Chance  
Showers

High: 48 °F

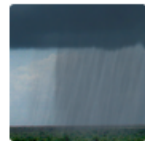
Sunday  
Night



Showers  
Likely

Low: 37 °F

Monday



Chance  
Showers

High: 48 °F

# TALKING ABOUT CLIMATE CHANGE IS TRICKY

- 2) **Uncertainty** makes it difficult to talk about future conditions and suggest interventions

## Uncertainty in everyday life:



# TALKING ABOUT CLIMATE CHANGE IS TRICKY

- 1) Seen as politically contentious even though scientifically accepted
- 2) **Uncertainty** makes it difficult to talk about future conditions and suggest interventions
- 3) Need to avoid mental shutdown to have meaningful discussion





# WHAT TO DO...



# WHAT TO DO?

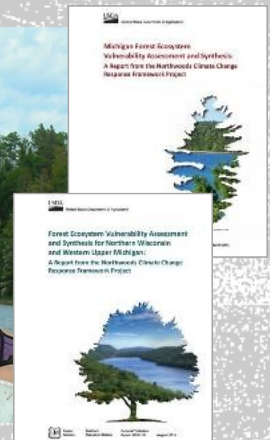
## Keep doing good forestry.

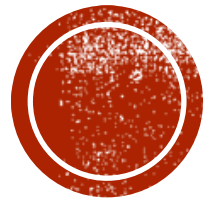
- Long-term view
- Maintain ecosystem function & benefits
- Adjust to changing conditions

Need climate expertise?  
That's our job!

*Stephen Handler, Northwoods Climate Change  
Response Framework Coordinator*

[www.forestadaptation.org](http://www.forestadaptation.org)





# HOW TO SAY IT...

WHEN DO YOU SAY "CLIMATE CHANGE" ?



# WHEN DO YOU SAY “CLIMATE CHANGE” ?

When it's  
a direct  
issue

## **Don't beat around the bush.**

- Somebody else has brought it up as an issue.
- Climate change raises a concern that is pertinent to management.
- You want to show that you've considered climate change.

# WHEN DO YOU SAY “CLIMATE CHANGE” ?

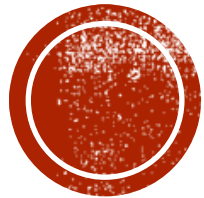
Your  
choice  
if...

- Climate change is an indirect factor with long-term effects
  - Client isn't interested and there's nothing to disclose
- Non-professional or non-technical audiences



**How important is it?**





# HOW TO SAY IT...

**SOME ADDITIONAL TIPS**

# HOW TO SAY IT

## **Extreme events resonate.**

“Intense precipitation events are becoming more common, so it might be a good time to invest in a larger culvert”

# HOW TO SAY IT

## **Be specific.**

- Climate change is too vague.

“We’re expecting warmer and drier conditions in the future, so it might make sense to use bigger gaps to increase regeneration of species that do well under those conditions”

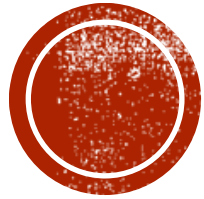
# HOW TO SAY IT

## List several reasons

- List climate change as one of many reasons.

“This management action will diversify the forest, improve growth of valuable timber species, and help adapt the forest to climate change”

**IN SUMMARY:**



**IT DOESN'T NEED  
TO BE AWKWARD.**

- Make it about the forest and getting things done.
- Be direct. Be matter-of-fact.
- Provide information specific to the audience.
- Have questions? Contact us!