Hampton Roads:
Climate Change and Sea Level Rise

“... hundreds of Virginians come together to map our road toward a safe coast and stable climate.”

Two Questions:
• Is a stable climate (in Hampton Roads/the U.S./globally) an option?
• What is a “safe coast” under an unstable climate and with a variable sea level?

Hans-Peter Plag
(Director, Climate Change and Sea Level Rise Initiative, Old Dominion University, Norfolk, VA)
hp plag@odu.edu
Climate Change ...

Marcott et al., 2013
Climate Change ...

IPCC Assessment: Very Likely

Marcott et al., 2013
Climate change is happening:
- now, certain
- everywhere, globally
- rapidly
- expected to get worse

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IPCC
Climate Change ...

We are Reengineering the Planet

Earth becomes Eaarth ...

Population, GDP, CO2, CH4, Temperature, Floods, Cars, Deforestation, Extinction
Climate change is a symptom, not the cause ...
Climate change is the result of global processes ...
A stable climate is no longer an option ...
We need a fundamental change of how we are in the world ...
... and Sea Level Change

“Normal” sea level variability: 1.5 m/century (5 feet/century)
... and Sea Level Change

Net mass change since Jan 2003

Oct 2011

Integrated Net Mass Change

Mass change (Gt)

Time

http://www.polarice.princeton.edu
Sea level change is happening:
- now, certain
- everywhere, globally
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Example Hampton Roads
Today’s rate: 5 mm per year (about 1.5 feet in 100 years)
Soon could get as high as: 20 mm per year (about 6 feet in 100 years)
Sea Level is very likely going to change rapidly

Under an unstable climate, a “safe coast” is a coast prepared for rapid sea level changes ...
Lovelock (and many others):
- Planet is on a run-away path; could reach a warm state (5 C warmer) already in 2050

Lovelock: Carrying capacity of Earth would be reduced to 1 Billion people

We are on Titanic after it hit the iceberg!

Lovelock’s Recommendation: Look for the lifeboats
A Fundamental Change ...

Economy is the link between humanity and Earth’s life support system.

An economy (and lifestyle) that meets our needs by burning fossil fuels is like a doctor who practices medicine by killing the patients.

Economy for humanity:
“An economy that meets our needs while safeguarding Earth’s life-support system, on which the welfare of current and future generations depends.”
“No problem can be solved with the same consciousness that created it.”
Albert Einstein

“It is difficult to get a man to understand something when his job depends on not understanding it”
Upton Sinclair