**Table # 7**

**Panel 1, Physical Threat**

**Note taker: Jennifer Cunningham**

**Moderator: Tal Ezer**

***Question 1:***What information do decision makers need from sea level rise and extreme event researchers?

***Answer/Notes:***

The key for us is that we need for a solid number to work with – ranges aren’t working, we need something solid to work with…

Scientists cannot give just one number, but maybe give more accurate estimate, in 50 years the sea level will be at least this amount, so if you’re the planner you have something to work with

I would agree that’s what we hear from the regions we work with that are doing sea level rise adaptation work – that’s the message we’re getting, they want that one number to work with – 1 meter by 2100? They would be appreciative of having something solid to have something to communicate to political leaders – with the political climate when the range is wide, in certain regions of Virginia there’s a denial of climate change despite extreme events that are affecting people’s lives – the tighter the data the better to support planning

Tim – in our business what’s helpful is the counterparts know what you’re talking about – the models are impressive, give you some sense of what you’re talking about – ex. Gulf Stream – if it does rise a foot where does it GO? Flood maps today, are they accurate? They’re not – they’re politically motivated

Tal – issue is miscommunication – scientists know what we’re talking about, but we will give ranges

But uncertainty is something politicians can take advantage of

If we went together and said scientists say we’re going to have a minimum of 1 meter by 2100 it gives you a starting place

Something they can’t deny

Could design building codes to prepare, for example

***Question 2:*** How familiar were you with the scientific information you heard?, What do you think is the level of public awareness about this information?  (If public awareness is low) How do we improve public awareness about these issues?

***Answer/Notes:***

*How aware is the public?* There have been lots of articles in the paper about flooding in Tidewater….what more can you do to inform the general public?

Psychological studies show if someone has a strong opinion, you can’t change it even if you confront them with the facts

It’s not that easy; if have strong political agenda don’t want to accept facts

*How to improve public awareness?*

Working with nonprofit groups that are willing to get the information out is helpful – keep putting stuff in the papers, planning events, get business owners involved

Tie it with events- respond quickly to tie communication to weather events, educational forums, etc

Social media also very helpful for short-term communication with public

As a scientist I am aware of the literature, but I didn’t realize there’s a lot of environmental news on twitter; we also meet with city planners

***Question 3:*** What is the biggest challenge to communicating the different levels of sea level rise and increased flooding?

***Answer/Notes:***

Keeping it in people’s minds – public is reactionary around events, but after a while then people stop thinking about it, people don’t pay attention; maybe need more city level, regional level

Industry solution – If you’re a mortgage lender, change the rate at which you insure your collateral

***General Question:***Given what you've learned during this panel, what types of collaborative research and action might be most useful in affecting adaptive policy?

**Answer/Notes:**

Research on the economic impact of past weather events?

People in the most vulnerable places move there knowing that a storm could hit them but they choose to live there anyway

City of Virginia Beach – looking at where we should be locating schools, shelters, critical infrastructures – we know our residents are not going to leave the beach – so what can we build that will help protect them and their property? How do we raise awareness so they have faith in our predictions, listen to us when we tell them they have to evacuate? We have to make it as safe as possible while still recognizing property rights. Also trying to protect the most vulnerable populations, making it safer for people who are going to have difficulty evacuating; trying to meet the needs of all of the population without going so far as telling them not to live there. Also need guidance from the state so we have the authority to craft flood ordinance, for example. Need political support from the state.

Scientists, researchers can collaborate to find consensus on a number to use for planning – this is what they should plan for

*Consensus Points:*

There needs to be some consensus over a sea level rise number that can be used for planning – politicians and special interests in particular take advantage of scientists’ inclination to give RANGES rather than solid predictions, exploit uncertainty to justify minimalist measures, deny funding

Communication between scientific data and the public needs to improve – need to translate for communities; people should be aware of issues because it appears often in the paper, but people with strong opinions often don’t want to accept/acknowledge the facts

Information not always reaching city councils, community groups

Can improve communication with public using social media, nonprofit groups

*Takeaways/Action Items:*

Need number to use for planning

Need scientific community to communicate with risk assessors; for example to inform the public when they’re in a flood zone when they’re purchasing a home

*Points of dissent:*

None

*Miscellaneous/Interesting:*

Concerns of the City of Virginia Beach – concerned about sea level rise, looking at where we should be locating schools, shelters, critical infrastructure – we know our residents are not going to leave the beach – so what can we build that will help protect them and their property? How do we raise awareness so they have faith in our predictions, listen to us when we tell them they have to evacuate? We have to make it as safe as possible while still recognizing property rights. Also trying to protect the most vulnerable populations, making it safer for people who are going to have difficulty evacuating; trying to meet the needs of all of the population without going so far as telling them not to live there. Also need guidance from the state so we have the authority to develop adaptive policy. Very difficult to do everything we need to do, and to plan, without guidance and political support from the state. This would be easier to do if there was some consensus on a number, a predicted sea level rise to be used for planning purposes.