

FACILITATING RESILIENT COASTAL COMMUNITIES USING SOCIAL NETWORK ANALYSIS

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We'd like input, feedback and discussion on how social network analysis can be used to inform facilitation strategies aimed at increasing diffusion of climate change information within a local network, building working relationships between local practitioners and climate scientist, and ultimately increase the implementation of core practices that increase the resilience of coastal Great Lakes habitats.

In northeastern Illinois and southeastern Wisconsin, climate change information is not regularly considered in land management decisions, and professionals with climate change expertise are not part of the local decision making process. In addition, there are few opportunities for private residential landowners to participate in the decision making process even though they own the majority (65%) of the land within the watershed. The Alliance for the Great Lakes and our partners, including researchers from the Great Lakes Integrated Science and Assessment center, IL-IN Sea Grant, The Field Museum and Chicago Wilderness, are facilitating an adaptation planning process with over 50 local stakeholders to address the climate change knowledge gap that is putting millions of conservation investment dollars and coastal ecosystems at risk. As part of our facilitated adaptation planning process, local stakeholders prioritized strategies to implement. A needed next step to implement these top adaptation strategies requires engagement of private residential landowners, local elected officials, municipal staff and local community groups, as there are the people who control or influence how land is used. Organizing and motivating these audiences is critical to achieving implementation of climate-informed conservation policies and practices to protect priority coastal ecosystems.

There are few tools that guide facilitation decisions regarding capacity building efforts, and measure whether the facilitation results in the desired impact. Under the direction of Ken Frank, we are using social network analysis to characterize the network, establish a baseline for climate informed behavior, guide the development of our facilitation strategies, and ultimately measure whether these facilitation strategies result in local implementation of adaptation strategies. Ken Frank's baseline analysis of the network is already informing the structure of each community's small multi-disciplinary Planning Teams to foster the diffusion of climate change information and improve collaboration between practitioners, decision makers, and climate scientists. After the planning and community engagement process we will resurvey the network to evaluate whether there is increased implementation of climate informed management practices.