

Water in a Warming World: Exploring the nexus of Climate Change, Water, and Human Values

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The Portland, Oregon Metro region is faced with rapid urbanization and as the demand for hydrologic ecosystem services increases, so does encroachment into undeveloped upland reaches of the watershed along with the negative environmental and social externalities that ensue. To mitigate this damage, water managers must design source water protection programs that incorporate the negative effects of water quality degradation due increased urbanization and potential adverse effects of climate change. In order to do this water managers must understand water utility ratepayers attitudes and preferences towards source water protection programs and climate change. We investigated customer support, more specifically Willingness-to-Pay (WTP) for source watershed protection programs, environmental values, climate change beliefs, and other policy instruments. The sample was comprised of 466 greater Portland, Oregon area residents. Respondents overwhelmingly indicated support for restriction programs and education programs, with a lack of support for financial assistance programs. Respondents largely distrusted non-profit organizations and federal agencies for implementing effective source watershed protection. Multi-variate analysis revealed that greater trust in local conservation agencies, recognition in the consequences of climate change, sense of place, higher income, and education were strong predictors of greater policy support. Personal values and political affiliation were good indirect predictors of policy support.

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