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Survey shows majority of Delawareans say it is time to act

DOVER, Del. – Most Delawareans believe climate change and sea level rise are happening, and a majority say the state should act now to address both issues, [according to a survey commissioned by DNREC’s Division of Climate, Coastal & Energy](#).

Residents surveyed also support a range of key strategies to reduce climate change and respond to rising sea levels. The survey, supervised by the [University of Delaware’s Center for Political Communication](#), was conducted in late 2019 by Standage Market Research with the results announced today by DNREC.

“More and more Delawareans are experiencing the impacts that climate change and sea level rise are having on our state, and this survey shows they support actions to reduce this growing threat,” said DNREC Secretary Shawn M. Garvin. “The next step for Delawareans is to take part in conversations to help Delaware decide where and how we must act.”

The key findings of the survey include:

- **Delawareans believe in climate change.** Three in 4 Delawareans (77 percent) are completely or mostly convinced that climate change is occurring, and 70 percent say the state should take immediate action to reduce its impact. Almost as many (71 percent) are completely or mostly convinced that sea level rise is happening, and almost two-thirds (63 percent) say we should take immediate action to reduce its impacts.
- **More Delawareans have personally experienced or observed local impacts of climate change.** Fifty-six percent report personal experience with the impacts of climate change, compared to 53 percent from a 2014 survey sponsored by DNREC. Meanwhile, a growing proportion of Delawareans (47 percent) now say they have personally experienced sea level rise. That figure represents a 19-point increase from the 2014 climate survey (28 percent) and a 25-point increase from a 2009 survey conducted by Responsive Management (22 percent).
- **Delawareans are concerned about the future of climate change.** A combined 56 percent of Delawareans think climate change will personally harm them a great deal (21 percent) or a moderate amount (35 percent). That grows to a combined 77 percent when respondents were asked if they think climate change will harm future generations a great deal (61 percent) or a moderate amount (16 percent).

“Future generations will judge us based upon the actions we take today,” Secretary Garvin said. “Failure to take action now increasingly locks us into a future with increased flooding, more intense heat waves and threats to our quality of life.”

Survey respondents were asked whether they supported various strategies to reduce climate change and address sea level rise in Delaware. Among the strategies listed in the survey for reducing climate change:

- 83 percent support increasing conservation of forested and agricultural lands;
- 80 percent support stronger air pollution controls on business and industry;
- 74 percent support increasing the percentage of electricity in Delaware that comes from renewable sources;
- 73 percent support stronger efficiency standards on household appliances;
- 53 percent support requiring that an increasing percentage of vehicles sold in the state be powered by electricity.

Among the strategies listed in the survey for addressing sea level rise:

- 82 percent support preserving undeveloped land and natural features to allow for sea level rise to occur;
- 79 percent support changing building codes and regulations to reduce risk in flood prone areas;
- 77 percent support avoiding building new structures in areas at risk from sea level rise;
- 74 percent support avoiding construction of new roads and infrastructure in areas at risk from sea level rise;
- 64 percent support elevating buildings in areas of risk using private funds.

Respondents also said they support more research into the present and projected impacts of climate change in Delaware:

- 79 percent favor more research on how climate change will impact agriculture in Delaware;
- 76 percent support more research on how climate change will impact the health of Delawareans;
- 76 percent support additional research on how it will impact the Delaware economy;
- 73 percent favor increasing research on how climate change will impact vulnerable communities, such as the elderly and low-income residents;
- 71 percent support research on how sea level rise will impact property values in coastal Delaware.

Standage Market Research interviewed a representative sample of 1,126 registered Delaware voters for the study either by telephone (601 respondents) or online (525 respondents). Interviewees were selected through random sampling. Statistical results are weighted by demographic factors to reflect population values. The margin of sampling error for the complete set of weighted data is ± 2.9 percentage points.

A full report of the survey results will be released in March.

View the complete summary report of the climate perceptions survey at de.gov/climatesurvey.

About DNREC

The Delaware Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control protects and manages the state's natural resources, protects public health, provides outdoor recreational opportunities and educates Delawareans about the environment. The Division of Climate, Coastal & Energy uses science, education, policy development and incentives to address Delaware's climate, energy and coastal challenges. For more information, visit the [website](#) and connect with @DNREC on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) or [LinkedIn](#).

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