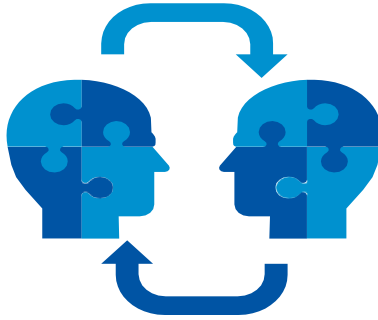# Social Science Basics:

Understanding Stakeholders and Writing Effective Survey Questions

The social sciences are a valuable but often overlooked element of coastal zone management. From marsh migration to flood mitigation, inherent in all coastal issues is a critical human component.

Course developed and led by:

OFFICE FOR COASTAL MANAGEMENT

Course details: This course is intended for natural resource and coastal professionals to explore and understand established social science methods to help increase your capacity to deal with the human dimension of an issue. Many of us in the natural resource field are conducting stakeholder engagement activities in some form, so why not do it to the best degree possible with established methods that can improve your information and outcomes? This training will provide a brief overview of how to better understand your stakeholders and write effective survey questions.

Day 1, June 30: Understanding Stakeholders

This module introduces the novice participant to prominent social science disciplines, important social science questions, and ways in which social science can be used to meaningfully and systematically engage stakeholders.

You will learn how to

- Identify and incorporate behavioral considerations from the social sciences in defining a problem
- Conduct a stakeholder analysis
- Evaluate the strengths and limitations of different stakeholder engagement techniques

Day 2, July 1: Writing Effective Survey Questions

Surveys are a popular information collection tool to help coastal managers understand their stakeholders and quickly assess large populations. Unfortunately, because of their popularity, many people untrained in survey creation administer poorly designed surveys that yield questionable results. This module serves to provide coastal managers with best practices to write more effective survey questions.

You will learn how to

- Review and critique surveys, and identify common mistakes in question design
- Incorporate 25 best practices when creating survey questions
- Create appropriate question layout and design
- Identify ways to improve survey questions that yield desired data types

Speaker Biographies:

Chris Ellis

Chris is a social scientist with NOAA's National Ocean Service, based in Charleston, SC. His training is in environmental sociology, survey design and implementation, recreation and tourism choice behavior, organizational behavioral networks, and social-psychological interaction with the coast. He has extensive experience in working with state and local municipalities to build capacity in coastal conservation, and community resilience. Working currently for NOAA, and formerly for both the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and the National Park Service, he has gained unique perspectives of how the public and institutions understand, perceive, and use natural resources, particularly in coastal areas. Chris received his PhD in 2005 from East Carolina University.

Brenna Sweetman

Brenna is Social Scientist with NOAA's Office for Coastal Management based at the National Water Center in Tuscaloosa, AL. Her work focuses on integrating social science to support sound decision-making to address complex coastal and water resource challenges. Through partnerships, collaboration and the integration of social and natural sciences, she works to better understand the data, tool and information needs to protect and maintain coastal communities, ecosystems and economies. She holds a Master's in Geography from the University of Alabama.