

SYMPOSIUM ISSUE INTRODUCTION

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On April 17-18, 2019, Monmouth University hosted the “Climate Change, Coasts, and Communities” symposium. Located just one mile from the Atlantic Ocean, the university’s picturesque campus offered an ideal setting for a robust discussion of the “new normal” of increased storm events, flooding, sea level rise, and coastal erosion due to climate change and how New Jersey can prepare for the daunting climate adaptation challenges that it faces in the years ahead. The symposium was hosted by Monmouth University’s Urban Coast Institute. It benefited from generous support from several co-sponsoring offices and organizations at Monmouth: the Global Education Office, the Wayne D. McMurray School of Social Sciences and the Humanities, the School of Science, the Political Science Department, and the Youth Activists Group.

The symposium assembled a distinguished and interdisciplinary collection of experts from the U.S. and Australia to address these issues from multiple perspectives. The two-day event kicked off with a student panel and an opening keynote presentation from Dr. Biliana Cicin-Sain of the Global Oceans Forum. The following day began with a breakfast keynote presentation on coastal climate adaptation in Australia by Prof. Jan McDonald of the University of Tasmania Law School, followed by three panels addressing climate change and the voiceless, coastal climate change adaptation, and climate change and anthropogenic eutrophication. It also featured a climate change and public health luncheon keynote presentation delivered by Prof. Robin Craig of the University of Utah S.J. Quinney School of Law.

The symposium website contains the event program with the full symposium agenda and speaker biographies. It also contains video recordings of the panels and keynote presentations, and presentations slides from all of the speakers. The website can be found at: <https://www.monmouth.edu/climate-coasts-communities/>.

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This special symposium issue of the SEA GRANT LAW & POLICY JOURNAL contains articles from three of the symposium speakers on pressing climate change adaptation challenges in various contexts. In her article, *Warming Oceans, Coastal Diseases, and Climate Change Public Health Adaptation*, Prof. Robin Craig addresses how a public health focused, disease risk approach can provide an effective focus for immediate coastal adaptation efforts by addressing real human needs and identifying practical “no regrets” first steps that can advance more general climate adaptation efforts.

Transitioning from U.S.-based to Australia-based coastal climate adaptation challenges, Prof. Jan McDonald addresses coastal adaptation planning in her article, *Girt by Sea: Antipodean Lessons in Coastal Adaptation Law*. She observes that there has been significant progress in Australia with precautionary planning and adaptive decision-making. Although entrenched interests continue to favor coastal development and protection of vulnerable property, she notes that these special interests appear to be loosening their grip on coastal adaptation policy. Her article reflects on barriers to future progress, noting the ongoing tensions between protecting public values and private property, and the problems associated with assigning adaptation decision-making to local government.

Finally, in his article, *Envisioning Nature’s Right to a Stable Climate System*, Grant Wilson, Esq., Executive Director and Directing Attorney of the Earth Law Center, offers an introduction to Rights of Nature principles and their potential to help address climate change. He first notes emerging climate change threats and underscores the failure of international law to adequately address climate change. He then argues that the Rights of Nature movement can serve as a useful tool to address climate change, such as by giving nature a voice at climate change negotiations. He concludes by identifying island nations as possible flag-bearers of one subset of the Rights of Nature movement and its relevance to promote climate adaptation.