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PUBLIC SAYS CLIMATE CHANGE IS REAL

Feels sea level rise likely to impact both coast and inland

West Long Branch, NJ - In December, nearly 200 nations meeting at the COP21 climate change conference in Paris agreed to take action on reducing greenhouse gas emissions that contribute to increased global temperatures and rising sea levels. The independent ***Monmouth University Poll*** finds that a large majority of Americans acknowledge climate change is happening, although they are divided on whether human activity is mostly responsible for it. The poll also finds a plurality of the public believes the United States will be just as impacted by sea level rise as the rest of the world, with a solid majority saying the effects will reach inland areas as well as coastal communities.

Fully 7-in-10 (70%) Americans say that the world's climate is undergoing a change leading to more extreme weather patterns and sea level rise, including 41% who call climate change a very serious problem. Another 19% say it is a somewhat serious problem and 9% say climate change is not too serious. At the other end of the spectrum, 22% of the public do not believe climate change is happening at all and 8% are unsure.

There is a significant partisan divide in this view. A majority of Democrats (63%) and a plurality of independents (42%) see climate change as a very serious issue, while just 18% of Republicans agree. On the flip side, a plurality of Republicans (43%) believe climate change is not happening at all, compared with just 17% of independents and 10% of Democrats who feel the same.

"The data exposes the extent to which this has become a partisan political issue in the U.S. rather than a scientific issue," said Monmouth University Urban Coast Institute Director Tony MacDonald, who served as a co-organizer of the Dec. 4 Oceans Day at COP21. "The compelling science of climate change

led to the historic agreement in Paris and the commitment of all nations participating to work together to stem the rise of global warming, increase the use of renewable energy, and increase financing for mitigation and adaptation actions.”

While most Americans say that climate change is happening, the public is divided on the major factor behind it. A third (34%) say that both human activity and natural changes in the environment are equally responsible, while just over a quarter (27%) put most of the blame on human activity and 8% put most of the blame on natural changes.

The *Monmouth University Poll* finds that 64% of Americans support the US government doing more to reduce the types of activities that lead to climate change and sea level rise, while another 26% oppose government action and 4% say it depends. Again there is a sharp partisan divide, with Democrats (77%) and independents (66%) being considerably more likely than Republicans (47%) to support government action. There is also a significant difference in support for government action by age – ranging from 75% of 18 to 34 year olds, 62% of 35 to 54 years olds, and 54% of those age 55 and older. [Note: most of the interviews for this poll were conducted before the Paris climate agreement was announced on Dec. 12.]

Scientists say that one significant consequence of climate change is a steep rise in sea levels around the globe. A plurality (47%) of Americans foresee sea level rise being as much of a problem for the United States as for other countries, while 40% say it will be more of a problem elsewhere in the world. Residents of coastal states are more likely to say the US will be just as affected as other nations by sea level rise (49%) than say the US will be less affected (39%). Residents of inland states are split – 43% say the US will be impacted just as much as other countries and 41% say the impact will not be as significant here.

To the extent that sea level rise affects the United States, more than 6-in-10 (62%) Americans believe that its overall environmental and economic impacts will affect inland areas as well as coastal communities. Just 24% feel the impact will be limited mainly to coastal communities. Majorities, although to varying degrees, of Democrats (73%), independents (60%), and Republicans (53%) agree that sea level rise will impact both inland areas and coastal communities. Residents of inland states (65%) are only slightly more likely than those living in coastal states (60%) to say that inland areas will be just as affected as coastal areas. However, coastal residents are more likely to say that the impact of some specific environmental consequences will be greater in their own communities.

“The polling shows that Americans believe we are all very much in this together. Nearly two-thirds of all respondents and three quarters of younger adults want action from our leaders, even if some in Congress don’t believe there’s a problem,” MacDonald said. “As unusual weather events become more common, the American public recognizes that the risks from climate change and sea level rise are

widespread. Superstorm Sandy’s landfall in New Jersey was just one stark example that shore communities aren’t the only ones affected. The flooding of inland areas and the impacts on critical energy and transportation infrastructure, including disruption of trade at our ports, caused problems that were felt throughout the state and the nation.”

Overall, a majority (55%) of Americans say sea level rise will have either a great deal (28%) or some (27%) impact on the environment – ranging from the weather to drinking water quality – in the area where they live. Four-in-ten feel their area will experience either just a little (20%) or no environmental impact (21%) from sea level rise. Among coastal state residents, more than 6-in-10 (63%) expect to feel either a great deal (38%) or some (25%) environmental impact in their communities, compared to just under half (46%) of inland state residents who say the same (16% great deal and 30% some).

The *Monmouth University Poll* was conducted by telephone from December 10 to 13, 2015 with 1,006 adults in the United States. This sample has a margin of error of ± 3.1 percent. The poll was conducted as a joint effort by the Urban Coast Institute and the Polling Institute at Monmouth University in West Long Branch, NJ.

About the Urban Coast Institute

Now celebrating its 10th year of service, the Urban Coast Institute (UCI) was established in 2005 as one of Monmouth University’s “Centers of Distinction.” The UCI’s mission is to serve Monmouth University and the public interest as a forum for research, education and collaboration in the development and implementation of science-based policies and programs that support stewardship of healthy, productive and resilient coastal ecosystems and communities.

DATA TABLES

The questions referred to in this release are as follows:

(* Some columns may not add to 100% due to rounding.)

1. Do you think that the world’s climate is undergoing a change that is causing more extreme weather patterns and the rise of sea levels, or is this not happening?

	TOTAL	PARTY ID			AGE			EDUCATION			LOCATION	
		Rep	Ind	Dem	18-34	35-54	55+	HS or less	Some college	College grad	Coastal	Inland
Yes, is happening	70%	49%	74%	85%	76%	70%	63%	63%	73%	77%	71%	68%
No, is not happening	22%	43%	17%	10%	16%	22%	28%	27%	19%	17%	21%	23%
VOL) Don't know	8%	8%	9%	5%	8%	7%	10%	10%	8%	6%	7%	10%

2. Would you say this is a very serious, somewhat serious, or not too serious problem?

	TOTAL	PARTY ID			AGE			EDUCATION			LOCATION	
		Rep	Ind	Dem	18-34	35-54	55+	HS or less	Some college	College grad	Coastal	Inland
Very serious	41%	18%	42%	63%	51%	36%	38%	36%	43%	47%	44%	38%
Somewhat serious	19%	19%	21%	18%	17%	24%	16%	15%	23%	21%	18%	20%
Not too serious	9%	11%	10%	3%	9%	10%	8%	10%	8%	8%	8%	9%
(VOL) Don't know	1%	1%	1%	0%	0%	1%	1%	1%	0%	1%	0%	1%
<i>Climate change is not happening (from Q1)</i>	22%	43%	17%	10%	16%	22%	28%	27%	19%	17%	21%	23%
<i>Not sure climate change happening (from Q1)</i>	8%	8%	9%	5%	8%	7%	10%	10%	8%	6%	7%	10%

3. Is climate change caused more by human activity, more by natural changes in the environment, or by both equally?

	TOTAL	PARTY ID			AGE			EDUCATION			LOCATION	
		Rep	Ind	Dem	18-34	35-54	55+	HS or less	Some college	College grad	Coastal	Inland
Human activity	27%	12%	28%	39%	36%	25%	19%	22%	25%	35%	27%	26%
Natural changes in the environment	8%	11%	8%	6%	7%	10%	7%	9%	8%	8%	7%	9%
Both equally	34%	26%	35%	39%	32%	34%	35%	31%	39%	32%	36%	30%
(VOL) Don't know	1%	0%	2%	1%	1%	1%	2%	0%	1%	2%	1%	2%
<i>Climate change is not happening (from Q1)</i>	22%	43%	17%	10%	16%	22%	28%	27%	19%	17%	21%	23%
<i>Not sure climate change happening (from Q1)</i>	8%	8%	9%	5%	8%	7%	10%	10%	8%	6%	7%	10%

4. Scientists say that sea levels are rising and that many coastal areas will be under water in a few decades. Assuming this is true, do you think the environmental and economic impact of sea level rise will be mainly limited to coastal communities or will it affect inland areas just as much?

	TOTAL	PARTY ID			AGE			EDUCATION			LOCATION	
		Rep	Ind	Dem	18-34	35-54	55+	HS or less	Some college	College grad	Coastal	Inland
Be mainly limited to coastal communities	24%	30%	24%	19%	19%	27%	25%	23%	25%	23%	26%	21%
Affect inland areas just as much	62%	53%	60%	73%	68%	61%	58%	61%	59%	68%	60%	65%
(VOL) Don't know	14%	17%	16%	7%	13%	12%	17%	16%	16%	9%	14%	15%

5. Some say that sea level rise will have an environmental impact on everything from the weather to the quality of drinking water. How much of an environmental impact do you think sea level rise will have in the area where you live – a great deal, some, just a little, or not at all?

	TOTAL	PARTY ID			AGE			EDUCATION			LOCATION	
		Rep	Ind	Dem	18-34	35-54	55+	HS or less	Some college	College grad	Coastal	Inland
Great deal	28%	18%	27%	41%	36%	25%	25%	19%	32%	39%	38%	16%
Some	27%	23%	28%	29%	27%	30%	25%	28%	27%	27%	25%	30%
Just a little	20%	22%	21%	14%	21%	21%	18%	24%	20%	13%	15%	25%
Not at all	21%	32%	19%	14%	14%	22%	26%	24%	17%	19%	18%	25%
(VOL) Don't know	4%	5%	5%	2%	2%	3%	7%	6%	3%	2%	4%	3%

6. Do you think sea level rise will be as much of a problem for the United States as the rest of the world, or will it be more of a problem for other countries?

	TOTAL	PARTY ID			AGE			EDUCATION			LOCATION	
		Rep	Ind	Dem	18-34	35-54	55+	HS or less	Some college	College grad	Coastal	Inland
As much of a problem for the US	47%	41%	48%	52%	47%	48%	44%	46%	52%	43%	49%	43%
More of a problem for other countries	40%	42%	38%	39%	42%	40%	36%	37%	38%	44%	39%	41%
(VOL) More of a problem for the US	2%	1%	3%	2%	2%	2%	1%	2%	2%	2%	2%	2%
(VOL) Don't know	12%	16%	11%	7%	8%	9%	18%	15%	7%	11%	10%	14%

7. In general, do you support or oppose the U.S. government doing more to reduce the type of activities that cause climate change and sea level rise?

	TOTAL	PARTY ID			AGE			EDUCATION			LOCATION	
		Rep	Ind	Dem	18-34	35-54	55+	HS or less	Some college	College grad	Coastal	Inland
Support	64%	47%	66%	77%	75%	62%	54%	58%	65%	71%	64%	63%
Oppose	26%	42%	22%	15%	19%	26%	32%	28%	24%	23%	25%	26%
(VOL) Depends	4%	6%	5%	2%	3%	6%	4%	5%	4%	3%	5%	3%
(VOL) Don't know	7%	5%	7%	5%	4%	6%	9%	8%	7%	3%	5%	8%

The *Monmouth University Poll* was sponsored and conducted by the Monmouth University Polling Institute from December 10 to 13, 2015 with a national random sample of 1,006 adults age 18 and older. This includes 654 contacted by a live interviewer on a landline telephone and 352 contacted by a live interviewer on a cell phone, in English. Monmouth is responsible for all aspects of the survey design, data weighting and analysis. Final sample is weighted for region, age, education, gender and race based on US Census information. Data collection support provided by Braun Research (field) and SSI (RDD sample). For results based on this sample, one can say with 95% confidence that the error attributable to sampling has a maximum margin of plus or minus 3.1 percentage points (unadjusted for sample design). Sampling error can be larger for sub-groups (see table below). In addition to sampling error, one should bear in mind that question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of opinion polls.

POLL DEMOGRAPHICS			
27% Rep	49% Male	32% 18-34	66% White
42% Ind	51% Female	36% 35-54	12% Black
31% Dem		32% 55+	15% Hispanic
			7% Asian/Other

	TOTAL	PARTY ID			AGE			EDUCATION			LOCATION	
		Rep	Ind	Dem	18-34	35-54	55+	HS or less	Some college	College grad	Coastal	Inland
Unweighted N	1,006	277	375	324	193	328	483	285	254	464	598	408
moe	3.1%	5.9%	5.1%	5.5%	7.1%	5.4%	4.5%	5.8%	6.2%	4.6%	4.0%	4.9%

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