

ABSTRACT

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Title: East Haven vs. West Haven: A Comparative Study on Public Perceptions to Climate-Induced Coastal Hazards

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Connecticut has many coastal communities along its Southern border that are vulnerable to damage from hurricanes, which would affect the environment, public health, and the economy. Individuals in coastal communities are at the forefront of any climate risk, as Connecticut's low elevation and riverways make the state vulnerable to flooding. Flood zones in Connecticut contain hundreds of homes and properties, the residents and occupants of which are at the forefront of climate risk. The following thesis examines the similarities and differences of perceptions among residents in the Connecticut towns of East Haven and West Haven. Based on original interviews with nine residents of those areas, the study examines their knowledge, emotions, beliefs, and identities in relation to climate change, including their reactions to flood maps of the outside community and their own. Findings show that the majority of residents take special interest and engage more with the climate as well as look to take action to protect the environment when it directly affects their community. Findings also suggest that diffusion of responsibility has a correlation with one's willingness to help and believe in the changing climate.