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[Andrea Estrada](#)

Conference Will Address Key Issues Regarding Sea Level Rise

Over the next century, rising seas will transform coastlines and coastal zones around the world, from small islands to entire continents. "Figuring Sea Level Rise," the Critical Issues in America series at UC Santa Barbara, will conclude this month with the Arthur N. Rupe Conference on Media and the Environment, which will focus on several crucial -- and highly misunderstood -- questions in the debate about climate change and sea level rise.

"Risk and Uncertainty and the Communication of Sea Level Rise," will begin at 9 a.m. on Friday, April 12, at UCSB's Corwin Pavilion. The event will feature scholars, experts, and indigenous peoples addressing topics such as which coastal communities are likely to be directly and immediately impacted by rising seas, what form that impact will take, and the challenges inherent in accurately identifying and communicating the associated risks. The conference is free and open to the public.

"In the morning, the keynote speaker and panelists will discuss the human dimensions of sea level rise -- and the use of local and traditional media to represent these issues -- in indigenous coastal communities from Alaska to Hawaii to Santa Barbara," said Ronald E. Rice, the Arthur N. Rupe Professor of Mass Communication and co-director of the campus's Carsey-Wolf Center.

"In the first afternoon session, panelists will explore the challenges in planning for and communicating the risks of climate change and sea level rise, when some

outcomes are as yet unknowable, while others are of immediate and strategic concern to the United States," he continued. "The final session emphasizes how different values and ways of thinking affect communication about -- and responses to -- the implications of sea level rise, and how to create engaging media while maintaining accurate sea level rise science."

Among the conference participants are retired Rear Adm. David Titley, former deputy under secretary for operations at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Agency; Paula S. Apsell, senior executive producer of NOVA and NOVA scienceNOW; Roberta Reyes Cordero of the Coastal Band of the Chumash Nation; Michael Williams, chief of the Yupiit Nation in Alaska; Kalei Nu'uhiwa, a practitioner of Papahūlani, the traditional Hawaiian field of atmospheric studies that encompasses lunar, stellar, solar, climatic, seasonal, and time-keeping areas of knowledge; Mica McCarty of the Makah Nation; and Dan Kahan, the Elizabeth K. Dollard Professor of Law and professor of psychology at Yale University.

The conference is co-sponsored by the Carsey-Wolf Center's Environmental Media Initiative, which brings together environmental scientists with film and media scholars drawn from the humanities, arts, and social sciences to explore all the ways media and the environment influence, structure, and inhabit each other.

Also sponsoring the conference is the Arthur N. Rupe Foundation, a non-profit organization dedicated to achieving positive social changes by highlighting critical and controversial issues. Other UCSB sponsors include the NSF Center for Nanotechnology in Society; Bren School of Environmental Science & Management; the Institute for Social, Behavioral, and Economic Research; the Department of Film and Media Studies; the Interdisciplinary Humanities Center; and the Center for Information Technology and Society.

An endowed program in the College of Letters and Science at UCSB since 1995, the Critical Issues in America series examines relevant social topics from a multidisciplinary perspective. Previous series have focused on environmental issues and policy reform; media ownership; women, employment, and globalization; violence in America; ethnic studies; and marriage and alternatives.

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