

INVITED SPEAKERS' ABSTRACTS

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Ocean science that has influence: making science salient, credible, and legitimate

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Scientific assessments of global environmental change, like that proposed by the OCEANS project, have become increasingly common international phenomena (e.g., the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the World Meteorological Organization's ozone assessments, the Global Biodiversity Assessment, and the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment). Although many of these global environmental assessments have proved quite influential, many more have done little to alter the political, social, and economic policies and behaviors that their authors hoped they would influence. A recent study of a range of global environmental assessments (Mitchell, Clark, Cash, and Alcock, forthcoming) demonstrates that the most common obstacle to an assessment having influence is the difficulty of making scientific information simultaneously salient, credible, and legitimate to multiple audiences. For the OCEANS project to ultimately succeed, the theories, models, and data it develops must be convincing not only to scientists in scores of countries, but also to the thousands of politicians making policy, the millions of businesspeople making economic decisions, and the billions of individuals making lifestyle choices that influence the health of the oceans. Succeeding at this larger task of producing "influential science" rather than just "good science" depends on self-consciously designing the OCEANS project to ensure all these actors view the information it produces as salient, credible, and legitimate. Making the OCEANS project not just credible, but also salient and legitimate depends, in turn, on who participates in developing the science of the OCEANS project, how the scope and content of the project is defined, and what linkages, facts, beliefs, and options the project highlights and which are ignored. This presentation will provide a general framework for understanding the influence of global environmental assessments and will suggest specific guidelines for how the OCEANS project can ensure that the deeper environmental understanding it fosters can also promote more effective environmental management.