

Message Framing in Video: Effective Communication of Forest Management and Climate Change

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Introduction

Climate change communication is notoriously difficult. Forest landowners will play a vital role in the adaptation to and mitigation of climate change effects. This study aims to find an effective way to communicate climate change science to **forest landowners in the Southeast** with video.

Barriers to communication of climate change:

- Causes are invisible
- Impacts lack immediacy
- Impacts are distant
- Behavior change options for forest landowners limited
- Well-funded climate skepticism campaign

Creating a Framework to Overcome Barriers

Diffusion of Innovations

“Diffusion is the process by which an innovation is communicated through certain channels over time among the members of a social system (Rogers, 1983).” Adaptation and mitigation strategies can be regarded as innovations. In the context of the social system, *homophily* is the degree to which two communicators perceive themselves to be similar.

Message Framing

Framing messages in specific ways is an effective strategy for communicating difficult, confusing, or controversial information to different audiences. Frames for climate change:

- **Local**, showing how climate change will affect people’s families and livelihoods directly;
- **Important now**, rather than in the future;
- **More than an environmental problem**, because that makes people think that it is only something that environmentalists should worry or care about;
- **Experiential**, using vivid imagery and messages that create an emotional response (Shome & Marx, 2009).

Elaboration Likelihood Model

Messages should be designed to increase the thinking (i.e., elaboration) of an audience. Both personal relevance and multiple sources of information help increase elaboration.

Research Questions

This research will be guided by three research questions centering on a common theme of message framing. The goal is to create a video that will communicate to forest landowners about research on mitigation and adaptation strategies for their land in a way that is not offensive, reduces helplessness and encourages participation, and fosters trust. Different types of framing will be employed based on what the researchers are interested in learning. This is reflected in the research questions below:

1. How does framing of the video in the context of climate change affect attitudes toward climate change, forest researchers, and forest landowners?
2. Are university researchers and local forest landowners trusted sources of information? To what degree do viewers regard the landowners as homophilous?
3. Which values will be most effective in motivating participation by landowners: economics or stewardship (egoistic or biospheric)?

Why Video?

- Visual learning is very effective
- Reaches a large audience
- Personalize imagery
- Quickly and easily digested

Methods

I will create 4 videos featuring interviews with forest landowners and PINEMAP researchers. The videos will demonstrate the research that PINEMAP is doing with regard to management of loblolly pine plantations in the Southeast and the potential for climate variability to affect forests, as well as explore management strategies landowners are taking on their land to prepare for future climate uncertainties. Variables will be manipulated in the following ways to create the different videos:

	Researcher with climate change	Researcher without climate change
Landowner with stewardship frame	Video 1	Video 3
Landowner with economic frame	Video 2	Video 4

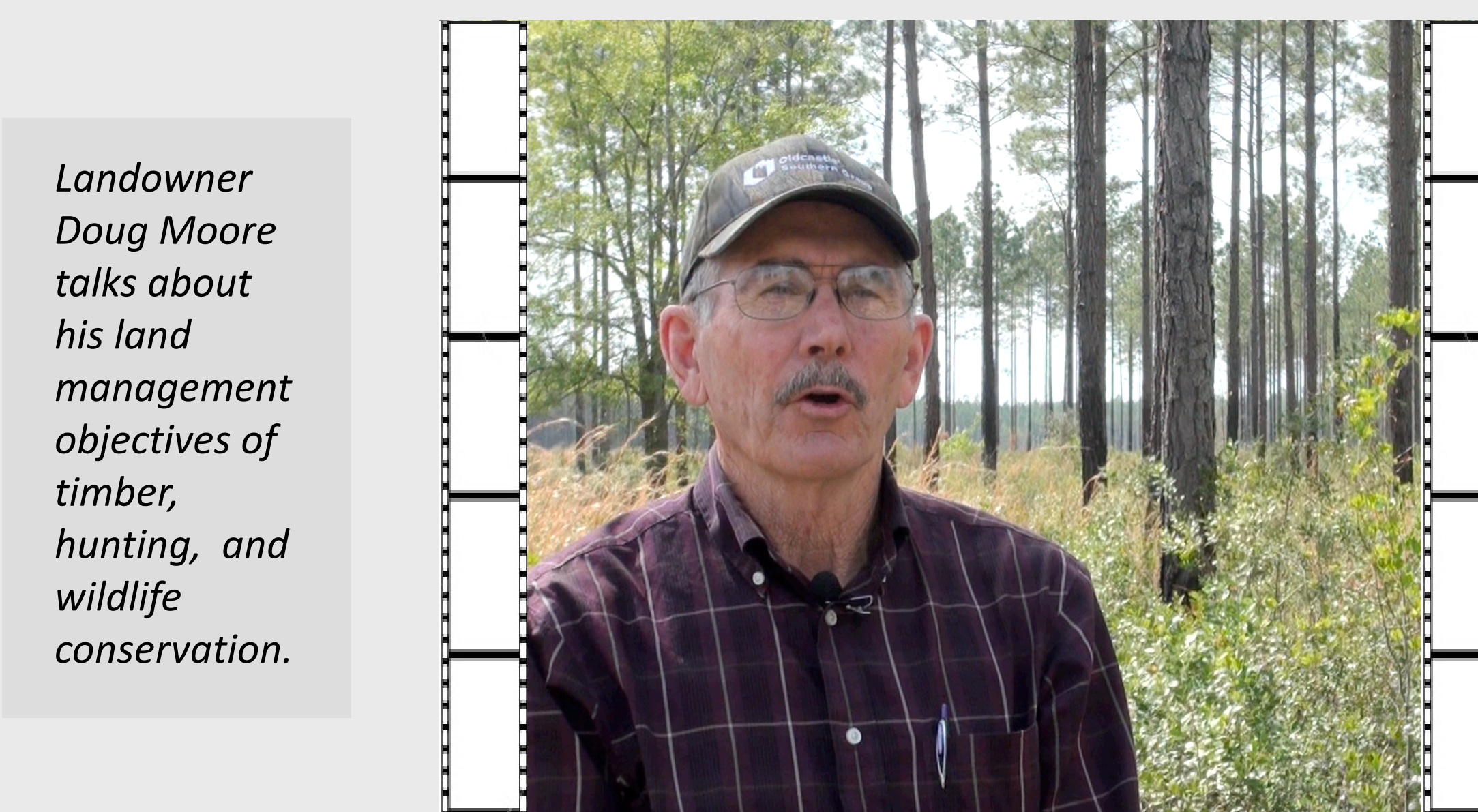
Videos will be sent electronically to forest landowners across the Southeast, as well as shown in existing landowner workshops. A pre- and post-survey will gather data relating to the research questions.



Expert Tim Martin discusses PINEMAP and its impacts for forest landowners.



Landowner Mike Adams discusses his land management strategies for conservation and stewardship



Landowner Doug Moore talks about his land management objectives of timber, hunting, and wildlife conservation.



All photos are still shots of video footage that will be used to create the videos.