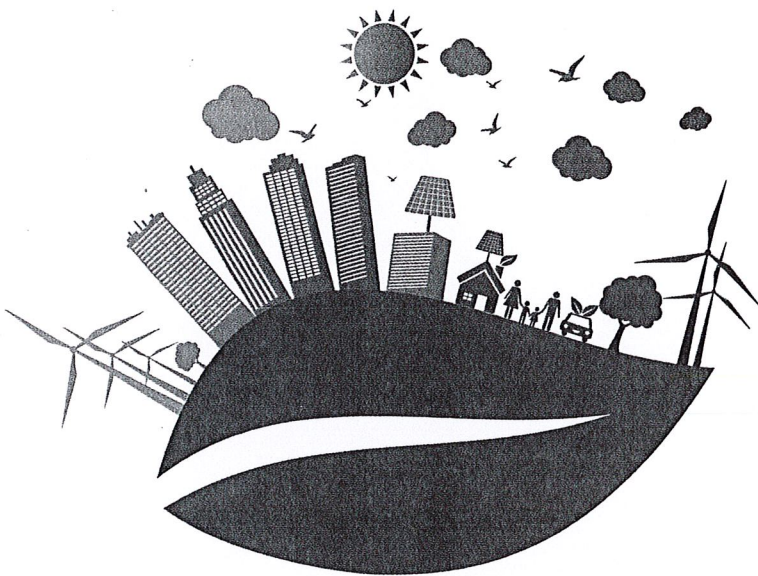


By Nuin-Tara Key, Climate Resilience Program Director,
State of California, Governor's Office of Planning and Research

Special Districts Can Play a Key Role in Climate Adaptation



California is already feeling the effects of a changing climate across the State. Wildfire, flooding and drought, and extreme heat have impacted people and communities – damaging infrastructure and natural systems, threatening public health, and disrupting local and regional economies. And by end of century, we anticipate even more substantial change. A few key findings from the State's Fourth California Climate Assessment (released in 2018) include:

- By 2050 heat waves in cities could cause 2-3 times more heat-related deaths
- California could see a 77 percent increase in the average area burned by 2100 if emissions continue to rise (business as usual)
- By 2100, water supply from snowpack is projected to decline by two-thirds (under a business as usual emissions scenario)
- By 2100, 31 to 67 percent of Southern California beaches may completely erode without large-scale human interventions (under mid- to high sea level rise scenarios).

These changes will impact every local government across the state, but it's not all doom and gloom. Special districts can play an important role in building community resilience and preparing for a future of more extremes by incorporating climate adaptation and resilience into long-range planning, infrastructure investments, and service delivery.

The 2017 Little Hoover Commission Special Districts Report describes special districts as “the workhorses of public service delivery” and they “represent the most

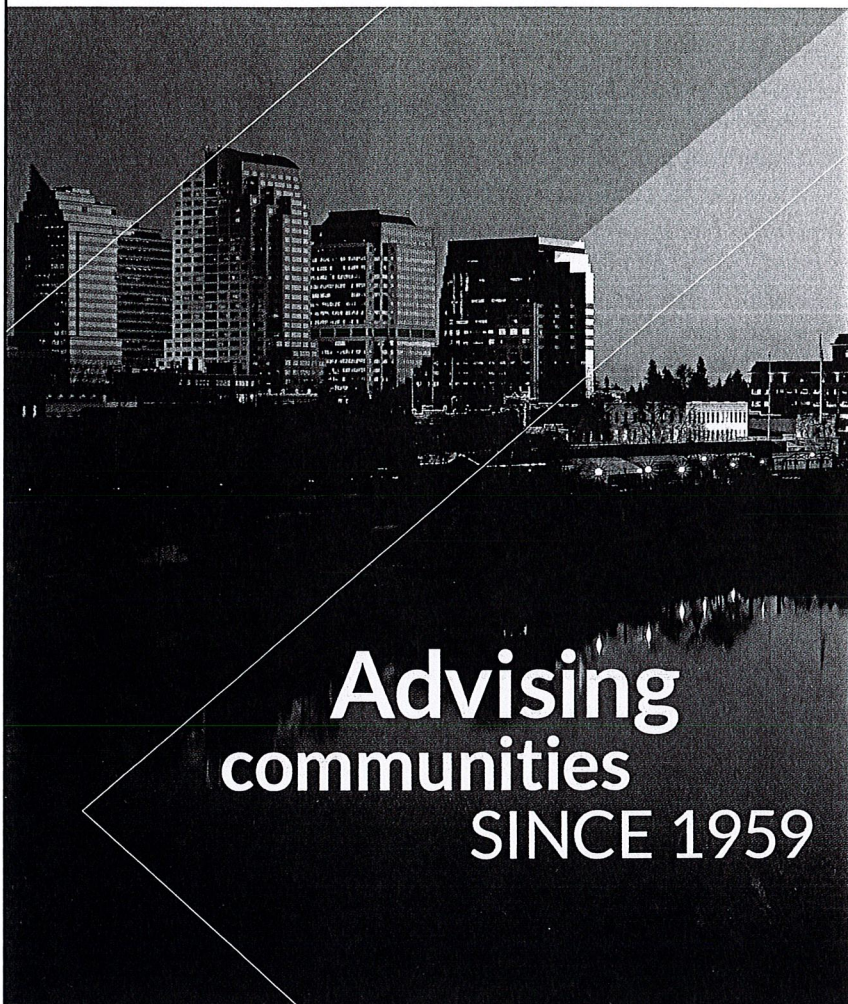
common form of local government.” This report also recognizes that some special districts, along with other local governments, are on the frontlines of dealing with the impacts of a changing climate and many are leading the way nationally in preparing for climate change. However, the report also found that many, especially smaller districts, have not been fully engaged in the state’s climate adaptation and resilience efforts.

Given the urgency and scale of climate adaptation needs in California, the Little Hoover Commission recommended the California Special Districts Association (CSDA), in conjunction with its member districts, partner with the Integrated Climate Adaptation and Resiliency Program within the Governor’s Office of Planning and Research (OPR) to (1) document and share climate adaptation and resilience experiences and (2) promote information sharing and collaboration among its members to help districts with fewer resources plan for climate impacts and take action. This recommendation also reflects an open invitation by OPR to build stronger partnerships with special districts from around the state – recognizing the critical role that special districts, along with all local governments, play in adapting to climate change.

The Integrated Climate Adaptation and Resiliency Program

The Integrated Climate Adaptation and Resiliency Program (ICARP) at OPR was established in 2017 via Senate Bill 246 (Wieckowski). The program is designed to provide a central point of entry for climate resilience issues, data, and technical assistance at the state level. Through its activities, program staff and the Technical Advisory Council that supports OPR coordinate climate activities at the state, regional and local levels. In addition to ICARP’s coordination role, the program is charged with creating and maintaining the Adaptation Clearinghouse (resilientca.org), which the Little Hoover Commission recognized as a valuable resource for facilitating coordination and information sharing between special districts, CSDA, and the state.

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What is resilience in California?

One of ICARP’s first initiatives was to create a strong and unifying vision for a Resilient California, to anchor the activities of both state and local agencies. In this vision:

- All people and communities respond to changing average conditions, shocks, and stresses in a manner that minimizes risks to public health, safety, and economic disruption and maximizes equity and protection of the most vulnerable.
- Natural systems adjust and maintain functioning ecosystems in the face of change.
- Infrastructure and built systems withstand changing conditions and shocks, including changes in climate, while continuing to provide essential services.

The Council also recognizes that a Resilient California is one where no communities are left behind. We must work to ensure that our adaptation and resilience actions promote equity, foster community resilience, and protect the most vulnerable – those in our communities who have less capacity and fewer resources to adapt and thrive.

Given this broad view of resilience, and the critical role that Special Districts play in providing essential

“ *LIMITED FUNDING IS ONE OF THE KEY CHALLENGES THAT LOCAL GOVERNMENTS FACE WHEN PLANNING FOR AND IMPLEMENTING CLIMATE ADAPTATION EFFORTS. ONE OF THE ISSUES THAT LOCAL GOVERNMENTS HAVE SHARED WITH OPR IS THE DIFFICULTY IN FINDING STATE GRANT OPPORTUNITIES.* ”

services to millions of Californians, it is imperative that special districts and their associations are partners in creating and implementing state and local climate adaptation efforts.

Adaptation Clearinghouse

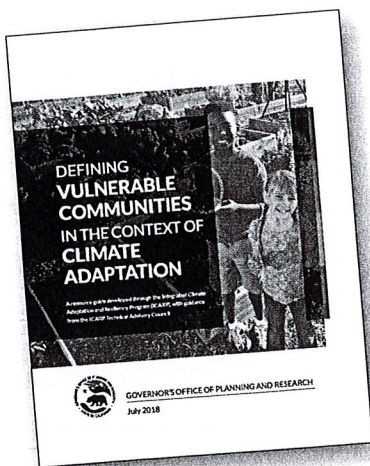


ResilientCA.org

The Adaptation Clearinghouse is a key portal of information for state, regional and local governments—as well as researchers and the broader public—to find science-based information on climate impacts and adaptation efforts.

The Adaptation Clearinghouse pulls together a variety of different resources, searchable by topic, geography, and climate impact, including:

- Climate impact assessments
- Communication and education materials related to equitable, community-driven climate planning
- Data, tools, and research that provide a view of how climate change might affect California at a local level



Through ICARP, OPR developed a resource guide for local governments on how to define vulnerable communities in an adaptation context, including a summary of publicly available data and tools to support vulnerability assessments. This may be useful for special districts when conducting vulnerability assessment or developing community engagement strategies.

- Plans and strategies that local governments are implementing to reduce risk and build community resilience
- Planning and policy guidance on how to incorporate climate into local planning activities
- Project examples and case studies related to working across jurisdictional boundaries, securing funding, building leadership and champions, and much more!

While special districts and their members are invited to explore the full suite of resources in the Adaptation Clearinghouse, a few specific resources may be of particular interest:

Climate-Informed Decision-Making:

The Governor's Office of Planning and Research (OPR) published *Planning and Investing for a Resilient California: A Guidebook for State Agencies*, which provides guidance for state agencies on how to incorporate climate into all planning and investment decisions (per Executive Order B-30-15). While the executive order does not apply to special districts, the guidance may be a useful resource for special districts on the consideration of current and future climate conditions, as well as how to prioritize equity and inclusion, and coordination with local and regional partners.

Climate-Safe Infrastructure:

To ensure that existing infrastructure is readied for climate impacts and investment in new infrastructure accounts for climate change from the outset, AB 2800 (Quirk, 2016) established the Climate-Safe Infrastructure Working Group (CSIWG) to bring together experts from multiple scientific and infrastructure disciplines to examine how climate change impacts can be included in infrastructure planning, design, and implementation processes. Given the important role that special districts play

in building, maintaining, and operating critical infrastructure across the state, the final working group report, published in 2018, may be a useful resource: *Paying It Forward: The Path Toward Climate-Safe Infrastructure in California*.

Funding Opportunities:

Limited funding is one of the key challenges that local governments face when planning for and implementing climate adaptation efforts. One of the issues that local governments have shared with OPR is the difficulty in finding state grant opportunities. In response, the Adaptation Clearinghouse includes an "Investing in Adaptation" topic page, that provides information on a number of state grant programs that can support local adaptation and resilience efforts.

Data and Tools:

With so many models and datasets available, it is hard to know which is best for a given project or effort. Through the Adaptation Clearinghouse you can find a selection of publicly available decision-support tools, datasets, and other research products relevant for California planners and decision-makers. An important resource developed by the California Energy Commission is Cal-Adapt, which provides state-wide downscaled climate data and visualization tools.

OPR and CSDA Partnership – 2019 Activities

As a start to the partnership between OPR and CSDA, the ICARP program is planning a number of activities through 2019 including:

- Adaptation member survey: CSDA and OPR collaborated to align the questions on the member survey with OPR's Annual Planning Survey that goes out to planning directors across the state. This partnership will allow OPR to better understand how CSDA's members are approach climate adaptation efforts and experience. Special districts will

receive this survey via email from CSDA this June.

- Case studies: CSDA will be collecting case studies through 2019 to document how members are incorporating climate change into their work. CSDA is using OPR's case study template, allowing adaptation related case studies to be hosted and shared through the Adaptation Clearinghouse.
- Webinars: CSDA and OPR will co-host a webinar for special districts on how to use climate adaptation tools and resources on Friday, July 26th. Registration information is available now on CSDA's website under the "Learn" tab.
- Roundtable: CSDA is organizing a climate adaptation roundtable event for special districts in November 2019 at an East Bay Regional Park District facility, and OPR looks forward to the opportunity to participate along with other State and local partners.

OPR is excited to partner with CSDA in 2019 and beyond and is looking forward to fostering new, collaborative partnerships with special districts throughout the state to build capacity and support integrated approaches to building resilient infrastructure, social cohesion, economic resilience, and healthy natural systems.

The severity of California's 2012-2016 drought was exacerbated by climate change. Researchers from the University of California at Davis estimated that in 2015 alone, the drought cost California \$1.8 billion and led to the loss of over 10,000 jobs.