

The Western Perspective: Local, Regional and State Cooperation on Climate Change in California

By California Senator Bob Wieckowski
March 9, 2017

Record rainfall, flooding and landslides after five years of drought, severe wildfires and heat waves are putting Californians through multiple extreme weather patterns with little time to recover. Welcome to the new normal.

Such profound weather systems illustrate the threat that climate change poses to residents, our natural resources and our infrastructure. The impacts on dams, levees, highways and nearby residential neighborhoods show how critical long-term planning and coordination of emergency services are to protecting the public health. Embedding climate adaptation policies at each level of government is a necessity to making California resilient in the face of our changing climate.



Recognizing the importance of coordinated adaptation to protect the lives and livelihoods of Californians, in late 2015 Governor Jerry Brown signed my bill, [SB 246](#), to create the Integrated Climate Adaptation and Resilience Program (ICARP). The [ICARP](#) includes a clearinghouse of adaptation information, tools and best practices. Later this month, the first meeting of ICARP's Technical Advisory Council, created to provide scientific and technical support to governments, will be held.

The ICARP was created after the [Senate Environmental Quality Committee](#), which I chair, held a series of state- and regional-focused informational hearings on climate change impacts and adaptation efforts across the state. Testimony from those hearings highlighted the need for improved communication and coordination of adaptation planning and priorities among state, regional and local entities, as well as a centralization of resources and data for use by all stakeholders to avoid duplication of research and planning efforts.



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The input the committee received from local stakeholders at these hearings underlined the need for improved collaboration to link the state's policy efforts with the many local and regional bodies that are partnering with a range of nonprofit, academic and private entities.

The hearings also helped educate committee members about the variety of ways climate change affects our environment. For example, sea level rise in the San Francisco Bay Area, combined with a large flood, could close more than 2,000 miles of roadway, the Oakland and San Francisco airports and the Port of Oakland. The greater Los Angeles region will likely see 60 to 90 additional high heat days each year by the end of the century, further exacerbating air quality in one of the most polluted air basins in the country.



The Central Valley is home to our most productive agricultural counties, and California leads the nation in agricultural production, producing more than half of the country's fruits, vegetables, and nuts. But our diverse specialty crops are threatened by increased heat stress, reduced water supplies, shifts in pollinator lifecycles and other climate-related issues.

The state's Department of Public Health cites three vector-borne diseases that climate change can also impact – hantavirus, Lyme disease and West Nile Virus. In 2013, West Nile Virus contributed to nine deaths and 165 infections in Los Angeles County alone. Increased temperatures shorten mosquito reproductive cycles, increasing breeding and transmission rates.

Through the Alliance of Regional Collaboratives for Climate Adaptation and other organizations, regions throughout California are adopting climate adaptation practices in varying degrees. Numerous state agencies are also working together to produce climate change assessments and guidance documents.

With extreme weather events becoming more common, California's ICARP will provide a unified clearinghouse of best practices and scientific and technical information needed to adapt to the new normal.

Senator Wieckowski chairs the CSG West Energy and Environment Policy Committee and represents California's 10th Senate District, which includes the cities of Hayward, Fremont and Santa Clara.

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The Western Perspective is a forum for state legislators and other constitutional officers to share bipartisan success stories with the CSG West community. Guidelines for contributions are available from Jeff Miller, CSG West Policy Analyst, at jmiller@csg.org.