

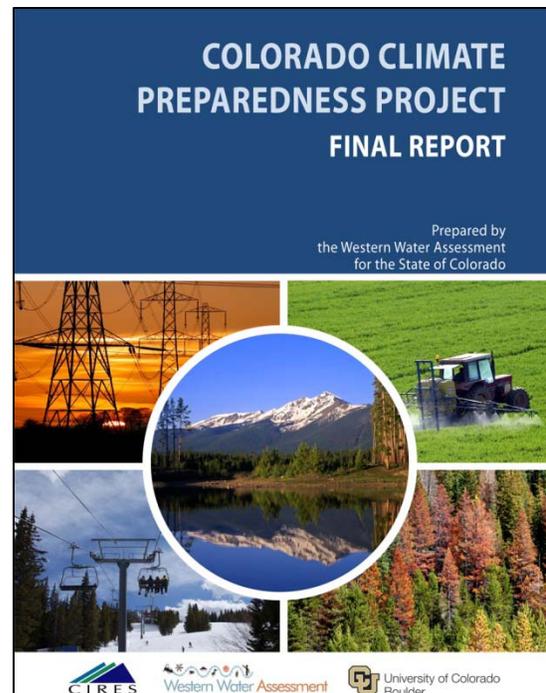


The Colorado Climate Preparedness Project

At the request of former Colorado Governor Bill Ritter, the Western Water Assessment initiated the Colorado Climate Preparedness Project designed to assess the State of Colorado's climate-related vulnerabilities for five key sectors: water; wildlife, ecosystems, and forests; electricity; agriculture; and outdoor recreation. The primary purpose of the project "is to assist Colorado in continuing to prepare itself for climate variability and change by providing a catalog of climate vulnerabilities and current activities, including personnel, products, and projects from Colorado and other appropriate entities." The primary deliverables, released in early 2011 include a final summary report, a website housing the "catalog" of individuals and organizations working in climate adaptation, and an online "wiki" tool as a means of facilitating a shared knowledge base of climate adaptation information in a rapidly growing field.

According to the final report, the project was initiated as a result of Governor Ritter's 2007 Colorado Climate Action Plan which called for state government to play a role in preparing Colorado to adapt to "those climate changes than cannot be avoided." The project was guided by a team of representatives from the Governor's Energy Office (GEO), Colorado Water Conservation Board (CWCB), Colorado Department of Agriculture (CDA), Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE), Governor's Office, Colorado Department of Natural Resources (DNR), and Colorado Division of Wildlife (DOW). The project was carried out by the CU-NOAA Western Water Assessment.

The project team reviewed documentation from a wide variety of resources, including other state-level climate adaptation plans, to develop a comprehensive picture of adaptation activities, resources, and assets within Colorado. The team also assessed the relative vulnerabilities of the key sectors to projected climate change impacts and developed options for adaptive responses. Finally, the project team interviewed 22 key stakeholders across the five sectors to learn more about actions already underway.



Find links to the project's final report below

From the report's Executive Summary, the following key points emerged:

- Because many climate impacts cross sectors and traditional agency boundaries, adaptation will require coordination across the state government as well as with other entities including the federal government, other states, regional efforts, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and municipalities.



Photo credit: Colorado Climate Preparedness Project
Final Report

- Monitoring is a critical element of climate adaptation, and includes both tracking climate variability and change at spatial and temporal scales that allow assessment of impacts and planning of adaptive responses, and monitoring the effectiveness of those adaptations.
- Additional research on the impacts of climate change on physical, ecological, economic, and legal systems is a need common to all sectors. Also, research is needed to anticipate the unintended consequences of climate adaptation and mitigation.
- A more complete impacts and vulnerability assessment centered on a range of plausible climate scenarios to prioritize Colorado’s key climate threats and vulnerabilities could point to adaptations that could reduce costs and potential losses.
- Climate impacts on water resources—e.g., changes in runoff patterns, snowpack, and storage—are a significant source of impacts to the other four sectors examined.
- The state is already engaged in many activities that are not explicitly driven by climate adaptation but that might create resilience to the impacts of climate.
- Communication between stakeholders and the state about climate change impacts and response strategies emerged as another important element of an overall adaptive strategy.
- A recurring theme across the sectors is the challenge faced by planners and managers as they attempt to incorporate climate change into decision making. Even agencies that explicitly and successfully incorporate climate variability into planning are struggling with the inherent uncertainty of long-term climate projections and the incompatibility of the time scales of climate change with existing planning regimes.

With respect to recommendations for next steps, the project team offered the following:

- The governor should set the tone for climate adaptation efforts by providing leadership and resources.
- The governor should weigh the pros and cons of appointing a separate climate change adaptation coordinator. The current climate change coordinator position has largely focused on mitigation, reflecting the priorities of the Climate Action Plan.

- Adaptation efforts need flexibility across agencies in order to be successful. Such flexibility must be supported from the governor's office.
- Water supply impacts are somewhat known, cut across multiple sectors and could provide a focus for a statewide impacts and vulnerability assessment.
- Alternatively, a multi-sector statewide impacts and vulnerability study could focus attention on climate sensitivities in multiple sectors, including those where our understanding is weak.
- Climate science is constantly evolving and should be tracked and integrated into planning on a continuing basis to reflect updated research findings.
- Though more and better climate information is coming, we know enough about the likely direction and magnitude of climate change impacts relevant to many sectors to move forward with an initial cycle of adaptation planning in many areas.
- The state should actively engage with several federal initiatives including the new National Climate Assessment, the Landscape Conservation Cooperatives, and the Climate Science Centers, both to bring the state's insights to bear and to benefit from these larger efforts.
- To encourage additional exchange of information, as well as collaboration across a range of interests, the state should provide resources to maintain and enlarge the database and wiki tool developed as part of this project.

The significance of the Colorado Climate Preparedness Project is the insight and significant infrastructure it provides to the State of Colorado and to local, regional and statewide interests to progress in climate adaptation objectives.

*Compiled from information available on the Western Water Assessment website:
<http://wwa.colorado.edu/>.*

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For More Information

The Colorado Climate Preparedness Project website: <http://www.coloadaptationprofile.org/>

The Colorado Climate Preparedness Project Final Report is available for download here:
http://wwa.colorado.edu/climate_change/docs/CCPP_final_report.pdf



This case study was produced by the Institute for Sustainable Communities for our Sustainable Communities Leadership Academy. The Academy is a state-of-the-art training and technical assistance program on community-based climate solutions. Its purpose is to build the capacity of communities to take smarter, swifter, more effective action to increase energy efficiency, reduce climate pollution and dependency on fossil fuels, create green businesses and jobs, and strengthen their resilience to the local impacts of climate disruption.

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