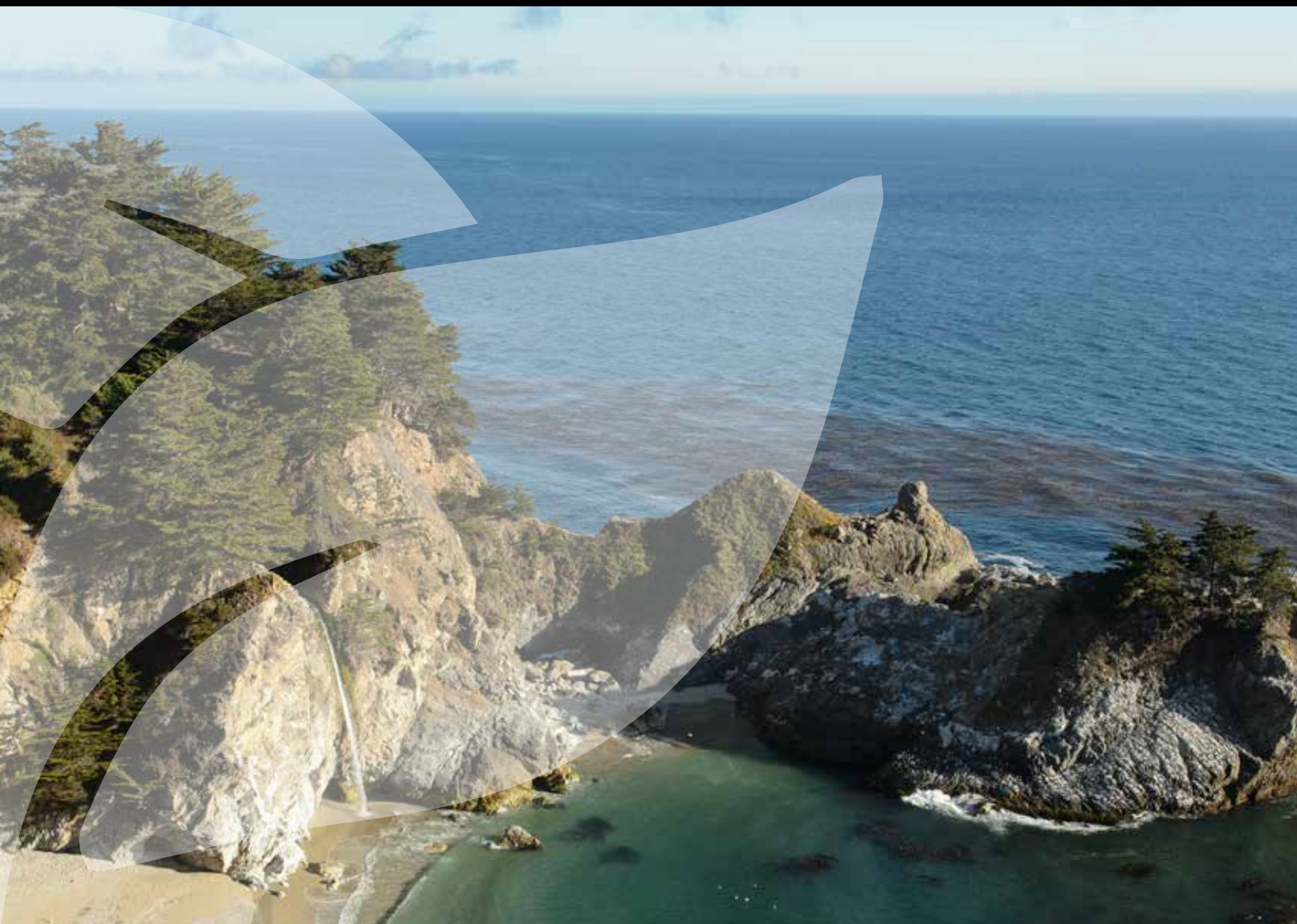


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annual
conference

2017 CSDA Annual Conference and Exhibitor Showcase



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Equitable Adaptation: Climate Strategies for All

By *Kate Meis, Executive Director, Local Government Commission*



conference highlight

2017 CSDA Annual Conference and Exhibitor Showcase

BREAKOUT SESSION

It's Getting Hot in Here

September 26, 2017

11:15 a.m. – 12:15 p.m.

Climate change is exacerbating equity issues already faced by people of color and immigrant communities as the result of long-standing economic, social, and racial factors.

“Climate change will act as a threat multiplier on the very communities that are already struggling to stay in their homes, put food on the table, and pay their bills,” said Francesca Vietor, Program Director of the San Francisco Foundation, at the California Adaptation Forum in 2016. “Climate change may very well be the greatest equity challenge of our time.”

Our response will require a broad alliance of labor unions, grassroots environmental-justice organizations and environmental groups to achieve public support for the wide-ranging emissions cuts necessary in the years ahead.

Key positions for environmental-justice advocates — according to professors Carol Zabin (UC Berkeley) and Manual Pastor (USC) in “Advancing Equity in California Climate Policy: A New Social Contract for Low-Carbon Transition” — include identifying low-income communities of color as locations for environmental cleanup, clean-energy projects, and good-paying green jobs. Incentives for residential rooftop solar and clean cars, for example, shouldn’t go only to affluent people, forcing those left out to push for separate programs for renters and low-income drivers.

Labor unions have been concerned that not all the “green” jobs generated by climate policies are good jobs, and fear income inequality could spread within the low-carbon sector, replacing good jobs in conventional-energy infrastructure with clean-energy jobs that don’t offer high enough wages to keep working families in the middle class.

As we develop climate mitigation and adaptation policies, we have a unique and urgent opportunity to strengthen the creation of equitable resiliency.



Their report identifies strategies that reduce greenhouse gas emissions while also ensuring California's low-income and working classes don't bear the brunt of the costs of climate-resiliency initiatives and receive a fair share of the benefits as the state transitions to a low-carbon economy.

Key Recommendations

- **Expand low-carbon programs that create good jobs and prioritize low-income communities**, such as community solar programs and energy efficiency in public facilities.
- **Promote labor standards, skilled workforces and local-hire provisions** on publicly funded green jobs.
- **Monitor "pollution hotspots" in disadvantaged communities** to assess the relationship of cap-and-trade and local emissions, and correct if excessive levels of pollution are found.
- **Establish "green zones" in California's most disadvantaged communities to focus investments** in pollution reduction and community resilience.
- **Start planning now for protecting workers and communities who may later be affected by the decline of greenhouse gas emitting industries.** While California is not expected to lose jobs in the short term, the risk of job loss may grow as we get closer to the emissions-reduction targets set for 2050, especially in oil-and-gas extraction and refining.
- **Develop an annual Climate Equity Report** to monitor whether equity goals have been reached, and identify areas where climate policies should be improved to advance equity.

Achieving Equitable Adaptation

"We can't continue to force communities to choose between a thriving economy and the ability to live," Miya Yoshitani, Executive Director of the Asian Pacific Environmental Network at the California Adaptation Forum, 2016.

As we develop climate mitigation and adaptation policies, we have a unique and urgent opportunity to strengthen the creation of equitable resiliency. Local models are emerging including:

- **City of Jurupa Valley Environmental Justice Element:** Jurupa Valley adopted an Environmental Justice Element in their General Plan in 2014 to foster meaningful participation in the public process by the entire community, reduce disproportionate environmental burdens affecting low-income and minority populations, increase mobility and accessibility for all residents, and build healthy and affordable housing.

- **Community-driven adaptation in Wilmington and Richmond:** In Wilmington, South Los Angeles and Richmond, California, Communities for a Better Environment has implemented a Climate Adaptation Resiliency, Enhancement Program that focuses on engaging residents to identify community-driven adaptation and mitigation solutions. These projects include providing residents with cool homes, permeable street surfaces, cool/green roofs, access to affordable healthy food, and access to clean, renewable, locally generated energy.
- **Engaging tribes – the role of traditional knowledges in climate-change initiatives:** Due to a long history of exploitation, many tribes are concerned about maintaining ownership of their traditional knowledges, including community traditions, intergenerational ritual practices and moral values. Tribes

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have been dealing with wildfires, droughts, and water scarcity for a long time, and are asking for the recognition of traditional knowledges so that they can use it to address climate change. Traditional knowledges are place-based, and have to be considered in context. It's important to identify risks before sharing sensitive information and ensuring data ownership.

Climate Adaptation and Community Aspirations

Social equity, civic engagement, and community resiliency are inextricably linked. A community can truly be resilient only when it ensures that its efforts to adapt to climate impacts, security risks and economic consequences protect and benefit all of its residents especially lower-income neighborhoods, communities of color and those who have historically borne the greater burden of unhealthy pollution, environmental injustice, and social disinvestment.

Building climate resiliency can seem abstract compared to more tangible demands to find safe, affordable housing, reliable transportation, healthy food, clean air and water, and jobs that can sustain a family.

For climate-smart policies to be truly inclusive, responsive and ultimately successful, we must be thinking of climate risks and solutions at the scale of human experience. What does a person need to be happy, healthy and resilient as an individual? How can we scale that approach to impact the way we develop climate-adaptation strategies?

The good news is that this is already happening in communities across California, creating viable models that can be replicated and expanded. These projects are not only reducing pollution and increasing resilience to extreme heat and other climate impacts but they are also providing for people's basic housing, transportation, food, and work needs.

As public servants, it is our professional responsibility and our social imperative to ensure that the decisions we make today protect and our grounded in the expressed needs of our most vulnerable residents. And in doing so, we help make the whole of our communities stronger and more resilient. ■



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