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Climate Ready Sonoma County: Climate Hazards and Vulnerabilities
New report identifies Sonoma County's risks and impacts due to climate change

SANTA ROSA, CA – The Sonoma County Regional Climate Protection Authority, a national leader in combating climate change by reducing greenhouse gas emissions through local government collaboration, released a report today highlighting the impacts climate change will have on our community.

The report – **Climate Ready Sonoma County: Climate Hazards and Vulnerabilities** – illustrates that despite widespread efforts to curb emissions, some level of effects as a result of a changing climate is inevitable. In fact many changes in climate, such as warmer temperatures, less precipitation, and sea level rise are already evident and have implications for the future of Sonoma County.

The report, commissioned by the RCPA and prepared by the North Bay Climate Adaptation Initiative looks at the risks we face as a region due to climate change, and identifies threats for which we need to prepare. It explores the potential impacts of climate change on various sectors, including people and social systems, built infrastructure, and natural and working lands by examining trends in weather patterns, sea level rise, and flood plains.

“The hazards identified in this report are not new,” said RCPA Director and Sonoma County Supervisor Susan Gorin. “We have experience responding to severe storms, floods, and droughts. However the science is clear that the intensity, severity and frequency of these events are changing. We must continue to invest in the resilience of our communities, and at the same time reducing carbon emissions is essential.”

Carbon emissions from the burning of fossil fuels for transportation and building energy are the primary drivers of climate change in the United States. Reducing carbon emissions remains a crucial component of preparing for the impacts of climate change. In addition, local governments are exploring how best to prepare for the impacts of climate change and the Hazards and Vulnerabilities Report helps guide that effort.

The report looks at four climate futures under high emissions scenarios and low emissions scenarios. It identifies six primary climate change hazards in Sonoma County:

Hotter, drier weather with longer summers

1. More increased heat events
2. Longer and more frequent droughts
3. Greater frequency and intensity of wildfires
4. Fewer nights that freeze

More variable Rain

5. Bigger, more variable floods

Sea Level Rise

6. Higher seal level and storm surge



“Scientists predict that weather patterns of the future will differ significantly from those experienced over the past century.” said Petaluma Council Member and RCPA Director Kathy Miller. “Looking at historic data to predict future conditions may no longer be the only source of reliable data for policy planning and decision making.”

The report is clear that local climate change is already happening, and causing hotter, drier weather with longer summers, more variable rain, and rising sea level and storm surge. These impacts create many cascading hazards to people, infrastructure, wildlife, and natural and working lands. Understanding and evaluating the ways in which each climate-change hazard may impact specific community resources is an essential first step in preparing for change..

Fortunately, there are already many agencies throughout Sonoma County working on solutions. The document lists a number of efforts that are underway by the Sonoma County Water Agency, the County of Sonoma, Regional Parks, emergency services departments, and others. The RCPA staff will build on existing efforts to reduce risks from climate change impacts through collaborative partnerships, education and continuing to pursue emissions reduction efforts through the Climate Action 2020 plan.

Public involvement

As a follow up to the report, the RCPA has worked with a consortium of partners to plan the first ever Sonoma County Adaptation Forum, to be held April 8th at Sonoma State University:
<http://sonomacountyadaptation.org/>.

The event is intended to introduce science on the local impacts of climate change and bring together individuals, organizations, and businesses responsible for ensuring Sonoma County remains vibrant and resilient long into the future. Speakers and panelists will share best practices for planning around climate change, and implementing projects to manage climate risks.

“Sonoma County is on the cutting edge of communities nationwide looking at climate change,” said Rohnert Park City Councilman Jake Mackenzie. Mr. Mackenzie is also Chair of the Local Government Commission, and currently a Director of RCPA. “This forum is an opportunity to take another leadership role in determining how we can prepare for the change that we know is coming.”

The Hazards and Vulnerabilities Report can be found here:
http://www.sctainfo.org/climate_action_2020_hazards.htm

The Regional Climate Protection Authority (RCPA) was created in 2009 by all 9 cities and the County of Sonoma to coordinate countywide efforts to implement and advocate a broad range of programs to deal with climate change. Most work to date by the RCPA has focused on reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

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