

Tools for Adaptation Abstract:

Title: Connecting smaller communities with climate information to support resilience planning

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In 2018, Western Water Assessment (WWA) led a pilot project to conduct climate hazard planning workshops in five small-to-medium sized communities in Colorado and Utah. Smaller communities face challenges accessing and using climate information that is relevant to their location and priorities. WWA is a boundary organization with a team that includes climate scientists, hydrologists, and social scientists. The workshops connected community leaders with WWA scientists and were grounded in the idea that both had vital expertise to share. The workshop structure was adapted from the VCAPS (Vulnerability, Consequences, and Adaptation Planning Scenarios) process originally developed by the Carolinas Integrated Sciences and Assessments (CISA) and the Social and Environmental Research Institute (SERI) to help coastal communities adapt to sea level rise and increased storm intensity. The VCAPS process uses an innovative real-time diagramming technique to map connections between community priorities, climate impacts, and adaptation strategies. The goal of this project was to better meet community information needs while evaluating how the VCAPS method could be used in different geographies for different climate hazards.

At the workshops, scientists provided community-specific information about the impacts of climate variability and change. Community members explored the consequences of climate change, drought, and extreme precipitation on topics including water supply, agriculture, recreation, and public health, and identified actions that could be taken to increase resilience. In the months following the workshops, several communities worked to implement actions identified in the workshops and continued meeting to explore additional resilience-building efforts. During the summer of 2019, WWA conducted a follow-up evaluation to investigate the impacts of this pilot project on each of the five communities that participated. In this presentation, we will share more about the pilot project and present the results of the follow-up evaluation.