

October 31, 2024

**Subject:** California's Fifth Climate Change Assessment

**Reporting Period:** July 2022 – October 2024

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## Summary

Worse and more frequent extreme weather events and trends are impacting the state every year, making up-to-date information on climate change essential for driving sound policy and investment decisions. California's Fifth Climate Change Assessment (Fifth Assessment) strengthens our understanding of climate change vulnerabilities in California through original research, new data products, and a series of regional and statewide reports to support on-the-ground implementation at the local, regional, tribal, and state levels, focusing on the needs of communities most vulnerable to climate change impacts. This report provides the Council with an update on the Fifth Assessment's progress to date and explains how the California Strategic Growth Council's (SGC) Participatory Research to Policy Model is central to the team's engagement efforts, by partnering with community experts throughout the research process.

## Background

The SGC Participatory Research to Policy Model is foundational for the public engagement strategy and research processes that inform the Fifth Assessment. Engaging with California's communities directly to understand their lived experiences, learning from local partners conducting their own community science, and speaking to practitioners about what questions they need answered is essential for ensuring that the Fifth Assessment is useful and accessible to diverse users, including local planners, community-based organizations, tribes, businesses, state agencies, and more.

At the direction of [SB 1320 \(Stern, 2020\)](#) and with funding from the [2021 Climate Budget](#), the Governor's Office of Land Use and Climate Innovation (LCI) is leading the Fifth Assessment in partnership with the California Energy Commission, California Natural Resources Agency, California Strategic Growth Council, and other expert and community partners. The Fifth Assessment will include the next generation of downscaled climate change projections and modeling, original research reports, regional and topical synthesis reports, decision-support tools, and a first-of-its-kind Tribal Research Program. This work contributes to the state's scientific foundation to inform planning and decision-making about the impacts of climate change and pathways toward building a more resilient future.

In August, LCI produced a progress update, highlighting major milestones achieved toward the release of the Fifth Assessment's various research and informational products in 2026:

<https://bit.ly/489xpjn>

## Overview Fifth Assessment Engagement Process

A key priority of the Fifth Assessment is to drive science to action and inform decision-making at regional and local levels. To do this effectively, the Fifth Assessment is expanding

opportunities for communities, tribes, academia, and other partners to participate in all stages of the research process. This model for community-led research sets a baseline for future climate action to leverage the best available science alongside Indigenous Knowledge(s), lived experience, and other ways of knowing so that all who are experiencing the impacts of climate change are not only represented in future climate research, policy, and action but are engaged in creating a more resilient future for all.

Our engagement efforts focus on promoting equitable partnerships between communities, research institutions, and the state; delivering meaningful engagement; and advancing community driven solutions. To date, these efforts have included, but have not been limited to:

- Supporting and building the capacity of the Regional Report Author Teams to conduct public engagement and uplift community priorities in the report development processes.
- Identifying two additional Topical Reports on issues of statewide significance to include in the Fifth Assessment based on public engagement and collaboration with experts and state agencies: (1) Climate Impacts to the Economy; and (2) Climate-Induced Human Displacement & Migration.
- Soliciting two rounds of applications for tribally led research grants through the Tribal Research Grants Program.
- Conducting outreach for original research opportunities through the Core Climate Research Program and CEC-funded research opportunities.
- A public Request for Information and four virtual listening sessions to guide the development of a framework for the Regional Synthesis Reports.
- Nine in-person and three virtual public workshops to gather feedback on the framework for the Regional Synthesis Reports, identify local priorities related to climate impacts, and connect potential author teams for the reports. Communities were also invited to provide feedback on the State Adaptation Strategy and the Vulnerable Communities Platform.
- Monthly Tribal Advisory Group meetings, government-to-government consultations, and tribally-focused listening sessions and roundtables as part of the Tribal Research Program.
- Participation in multiple statewide conferences, such as the California Tribal Water Summit, the California Adaptation Forum (CAF), the Adaptation Planning Association (APA) California Conference, the San Diego Climate Summit, the American Geophysical Union (AGU), and the Tribal Climate and Health Adaptation Summit.
- Regular and ongoing coordination with state agencies through internal forums and public working groups, such as the Integrated Climate Adaptation and Resiliency Program Technical Advisory Council and the Climate Data and Analysis Working Group.
- Identifying 26 Priority Research Topics that represent gaps in the state's understanding of climate impacts through comprehensive coordination with experts and practitioners throughout the state.



## Tribal Engagement and Consultation

Indigenous peoples are on the frontlines of climate change, enduring and adapting to severe droughts, floods, historic wildfires, rising seas, and record temperatures. The Fifth Assessment team is committed to meaningful and respectful engagement with tribal communities and supporting tribally led climate change research initiatives through the Tribal Research Program to address this critical need and further support the work already underway in tribal communities.

The Tribal Research Program includes the establishment of the Fifth Assessment's first Tribal Advisory Group to guide the state on uplifting Indigenous Knowledge and tribal expertise throughout the development of all research products and tools. It also includes the Tribal Research Grant Program to support research by California Native American tribes to address tribal needs and questions related to climate change. A Statewide Topical Report on Tribal and Indigenous Communities will also be included in the Fifth Assessment. It will build on the *Fourth* Assessment's Tribal and Indigenous Communities Report, which highlighted certain tribes' innovative strategies and actions to address climate change, and defined key climate impacts at the nexus of tribal lands, histories and current conditions. The report included proposed overall recommendations for future Assessment(s), including collaborative climate action across the state that incorporates traditional knowledge(s) and areas of tribal study that have guided the scoping process for Fifth Assessment research processes.

## Next Steps

With research underway, the Fifth Assessment team, alongside regional and topical Author teams will continue to prioritize public engagement to ensure that frontline communities and their trusted partners perspectives are uplifted in the research synthesis process. Prioritizing diverse voices and perspectives alongside the state's climate research agenda helps ensure that the Fifth Assessment creates accessible and meaningful data sets, tools, and information that can support California's collective action on climate change resilience.

To participate in the ongoing and upcoming opportunities to contribute to the Fifth Assessment, join our mailing list: <https://bit.ly/3BJHg3x>

### Timeline:

- Ongoing – Engagement and Coordination Across Research Teams
- 2024 – Launch Regional and Topical Report Development Processes
- 2025 – Statewide Summary Development
- 2026 – Expert and State Reviews
- 2026 – Final Design and Editing
- 2026 – Rollout



## Discussion Questions

As the Fifth Climate Change Assessment team begins to map out the roll-out plans for the final products, original research, climate data and projections, and key findings in 2026, we would like to hear from you. Specifically:

- How can we best uplift your organization's climate priorities and existing resources in the Fifth Assessment?
- What engagement opportunities do you have planned in the coming year that could highlight the Fifth Assessment's opportunities for input, review and collaboration?

## Attachments

Attachment A: Participatory Research to Policy Model

Attachment B: Fifth Assessment 2023 Engagement Summary

Attachment C: Fifth Assessment Timeline