

Feb. 25, 2026

**Subject:** California's Fifth Climate Change Assessment Update  
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## Summary

California's Climate Change Assessments contribute to the scientific foundation for understanding long-term climate-related vulnerability throughout California. Leveraging diverse expertise and perspectives, new research as a part of California's Fifth Climate Change Assessment (Fifth Assessment) will address current gaps in the state's understanding of climate change impacts and adaptation opportunities. Through a community-driven research process with communities, Tribes, academia, and other partners who are helping drive science to action and inform decision-making at the regional and local levels, the Fifth Assessment is being uniquely developed to support on-the-ground implementation and decision-making at local, regional, Tribal, and state levels, with a focus on the needs of communities most vulnerable to climate change impacts.

Thanks to partnerships with diverse research teams, including academics, Tribal communities, community representatives, practitioners, and other subject matter experts, the Fifth Assessment is on track to deliver findings from nearly 70 reports and data products to the public later this year.

## Background

### 2025 Highlights

California's Climate Assessment is a multi-year research effort with government, academic, Tribal, and community partners to generate new data, original research, and syntheses on the ways climate change impacts California's diverse communities. Senate Bill 1320 (Stern, 2020) calls on the state to advance action-based science by developing California Climate Change Assessments at least every five years. Building on the strong foundation set by previous Assessments, the California Governor's Office of Land Use and Climate Innovation (LCI) is leading implementation of Fifth Assessment, in partnership with the California Energy Commission, California Natural Resources Agency, and California Strategic Growth Council (SGC).

The Fifth Assessment uses research to help California communities and the State develop responses to the mounting impacts of climate change. The portfolio includes:

- **New data and scenarios** projecting future impacts of climate change in California
- **Original Climate Research** that addresses California-specific research needs and questions related to climate change
- **A Tribal Research Grant Program** to collaborate on Indigenous knowledges and Tribal expertise, and uplift input from California Native American Tribes throughout the Fifth Assessment process



- **Regional, Topical, and Statewide Synthesis Reports** that connect this cutting-edge research to the needs and context of regions across the state
- **A dedicated, sustained, and equity-centered engagement process** to ensure this information drives climate action on the ground

### **Overview of Fifth Assessment Engagement Process**

The SGC Participatory Research to Policy Model to design the public engagement strategy and research processes that inform the Fifth Assessment is foundational in meeting the Assessment's key priority to drive science to action and inform decision-making at regional and local levels. 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.

To do this effectively, the Fifth Assessment has expanded opportunities for broad participation in all stages of the research process. 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 Assessment is useful and accessible to diverse users, including local planners, community-based organizations, Tribes, businesses, state agencies, and more.

### ***Tribal Engagement***

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.

The Fifth Assessment's Tribal Research Program launched the first-of-its-kind Tribal Advisory Group, whose members guide the state on uplifting Indigenous Knowledge and Tribal expertise throughout the development of all research products and tools. The Assessment also features a Tribal Research Grant Program to fund research projects 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 California's Fourth Climate Change 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 Assessments, 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.

## Progress Update

Over the course of the assessment scoping and development process, project teams have made significant progress developing a robust suite of research and tools, with consistent public engagement to ensure that frontline communities' and their trusted partners' perspectives are included in all steps of the research process. Prioritizing diverse voices and perspectives alongside the state's climate research agenda helps ensure that the assessment creates accessible and meaningful data sets, tools, and information that can support California's collective action on climate change resilience.

Key milestones include:

- Recruiting over 60 expert Author Teams to lead the [Core Climate Research Program](#) research projects, [Tribal Research Grant Projects](#), and [Regional](#) and [Topical](#) Synthesis Reports.
- Provided access to climate change projections data and scenarios through the Cal-Adapt Analytics Engine. These data have already informed various tools and applications, including the Vulnerable Communities Platform (VCP), an easy-to-use tool that shows how climate change related extreme heat, flooding, sea level rise, drought and wildfire are expected to affect California communities.
- Established an editorial board led by Editor-in-Chief Pramod Khargonekar, University of California, Irvine, and Deputy Lead Editor Sagar Parajuli, San Diego State University, and launched a robust review and editing process with more than 100 reviewers and associate editors.
- Led and participated in statewide and regionally focused public engagement and interagency coordination opportunities to inform the research and share findings.
- Expanded the [Tribal Advisory Group](#) with three new members to continue guiding Tribal engagement that is grounded in cultural competency and uplifts Indigenous Knowledges throughout the Fifth Assessment.
- Recruited Design teams to support the final publication of key materials.
- Recruited General and Tribal Engagement partners to inform equitable engagement for the Fifth Assessment roll out in 2026.

### Rollout of the Fifth Assessment

We are excited to share that we are on track to release the final Fifth Assessment resources this year. Reports and key findings from the Fifth Assessment will be ready to roll out to the public on the California Climate Assessment website, beginning in Summer 2026. Following the staggered rollout of Fifth Assessment products and materials, LCI will offer various engagement opportunities, tailored materials, tools, and technical assistance to promote findings, foster networking, enhance learning, and support connections between research, investments and on-the-ground action. This menu of resources will be provided to diverse audiences, including

but not limited to: youth, California Native American Tribes, local, regional, and state government, and community-based organizations.

To showcase the Fifth Assessment's research findings, data products and tools, and uplift climate resiliency efforts throughout California in recent years, LCI will host a three-day Resilient California Summit at the SAFE Credit Union Convention Center in Sacramento, Oct. 20-22, 2026. This summit will bring together climate adaptation and resilience practitioners, local and state government, Tribal partners, community organizers, utilities, private firms, and academia. Participants will learn about new research findings produced through the Fifth Assessment, discuss innovative climate resilient projects, and share strategies to connect climate science, policy, and action.

## Discussion Questions

As the Fifth Assessment team continues to map out rollout plans for the final products, original research, climate data and projections, and key findings in 2026, we would like to hear your feedback on the following:

Where do you see opportunities for partnerships or alignment?

- Proposing specific discussions for the Resilient California Summit
- Collaborating on public workshops
- Developing briefings on select reports
- Fostering connections to expert author teams
- Hosting trainings on decision-support tools, such as VCP
- Designing and disseminating educational modules to build capacity and connect science to action

