

Boulder County Climate Change Preparedness Plan

Climate already affects a variety of resources managed by Boulder County, the City of Boulder, and other local municipalities. As an example, prolonged dry spells in the past decade have contributed to major wildfires on public lands that have threatened lives, impacted public health, damaged county and city property and infrastructure, and caused accelerated hill slope erosion that has polluted streams and water supplies. Resource managers working at county departments and throughout other jurisdictions already face challenges posed by the variability of climate across Boulder County.



Climate change, however, could pose a host of new challenges and require managers to pay much greater attention to resource vulnerabilities. Potential impacts could include:

- more frequent droughts and flash floods,
- greater spread of vector-borne diseases,
- increased heat waves and wildfires,
- warmer springtime temperatures that would cause snowpack to melt earlier in the year, reducing
 - the overall amount of water stored as snow,
 - runoff during the dry summer months,
- potential challenges in storing water for municipal supplies,
- reduced stream flows with subsequent impacts to
 - water quality and ecological resources and,
 - related benefits such as recreation and tourism,
- higher temperatures and fewer days with precipitation will likely increase the frequency and severity of,
 - episodes of poor air quality,
 - associated human health impacts.

The objective of this plan is to assist county and city departments that manage climate-sensitive resources and assets to achieve their departmental objectives in the face of challenges posed by anticipated future changes in the climate of Boulder County.

Structure of the Plan

This plan focuses on four key sectors:

- water supply,
- emergency management,
- public health, and
- agriculture and natural resources.

This plan identifies the potential impacts of climate change, explores the implications of these changes in the context of resource management institutions, and outlines opportunities for adaptation planning efforts.



The plan has been designed so that each chapter can stand alone and provide those interested in a particular sector with information on that sector. If, for example, a resident or public health planner is primarily interested in the effects of climate change on public health issues, he or she need only read the public health chapter. This allows resource managers, their administrative leadership, and their advisory boards to extract the information most relevant to their decisions without having to read the entire plan.

It does mean that there is some duplication of information in the plan, especially between the impact discussions in the science chapter and the impact discussions in each of the four sector chapters. Despite this overlap it is recommended that users of specific chapters also read Chapter 2 of the plan, which provides a state-of-the-science overview of projected climate change along the Colorado Front Range and Boulder County in particular. Chapter 2 provides a useful context for all other chapters.

Chapters 3 through 6 contain policy-oriented assessments of opportunities to integrate climate change and adaptation planning into city and county decision-making processes, management approaches, and existing planning documents.

The overall county strategy for meeting the challenge of future climate change and implementing the plan is outlined in the final chapter.

Sector-specific policy recommendations

The following recommendations come directly from each of the sector chapters. For a more detailed description of each of these recommendations, please refer to the identified chapter.

Water supply (see Chapter 3)

- Create a climate adaptation learning network for water
- Provide a means to translate and communicate climate science
- Plan for a variety of different climates
- Ensure funding and support for “no-regrets” projects
- Provide a forum for community dialogue on water and climate
- Coordinate with Emergency Management officials
- Develop source water protection policies
- Prepare for the consequences of severe wildfires on water resources
- Continue public outreach on reliability criteria
- Prioritize Boulder County Parks and Open Space investments in water efficiency improvements.

Emergency management (see Chapter 4)

- Continue to reduce vulnerability to hazards through implementation of mitigation recommendations within Multi-Hazard Mitigation Plans and master plans
- Incorporate climate change considerations in next update to the Multi-Hazard Mitigation Plans for the County and City of Boulder
- Incorporate “recovery mitigation” considerations in next update to the Multi-Hazard Mitigation Plans
- Continue recovery planning effort underway
- Continue to enhance flood detection network
- Continue Boulder’s Emergency Management efforts for process improvement and self-assessment
- Hire a full-time Community Wildfire Prevention Plan coordinator
- Adopt and implement the City of Boulder critical facilities and mobile populations ordinance
- Continue to enhance city and county floodplain management programs through participation in the National Floodplain Insurance Plan’s Community Rating System
- Evaluate the possibility of including higher regulatory standards for critical facilities protection in the county’s floodplain management ordinance
- Continue to prepare studies that will facilitate rapid recovery from floods and wildfires.

Public health (see Chapter 5)

- Develop a comprehensive county recovery plan
- Advocate for consideration of public health impacts in other climate change-related decision-making arenas
- Enhance community public health partnerships
- Encourage viewing climate change in terms of specific challenges and impacts.

Agriculture and natural resources (see Chapter 6)

- Convene a multi-agency work group to coordinate resource management strategies across jurisdictional boundaries
- Promote and foster biodiversity and ecological resilience to reduce species vulnerability
- Expand and enhance monitoring networks for climate data
- Re-assess acquisition priorities
- Ask the climate question in system-wide management plans
- Prioritize information transfer on climate change issues.

Cross-cutting policy recommendations and plan implementation (see Chapter 7)

- Incorporate adaptation principles into comprehensive planning
- Assign a point person to coordinate adaptation activities
- Establish a permanent Climate Adaptation Planning Committee
- Regularly revisit the climate resilience plan
- Continue and expand public involvement
- Expand sectors included in plan update
- Expand communities included in plan update
- Expand community-wide education and outreach.

A draft of the plan and a survey link are available on the Climate Change Preparedness Plan page of the Boulder County website: www.bouldercounty.org Click on the “Sustain” button and scroll to “Energy and Climate,” or go directly to bit.ly/C2P2BoulderCounty

Comments will be accepted through Feb. 24th, 2012.

Feedback will also be accepted at

P.O. Box 471, Boulder, Colorado, 80036

Attn: BOCC Climate Change Preparedness Plan

For additional information, email Sustainability Planner Lisa Friend at lfriend@bouldercounty.org