

CLIMATE INFORMATION NEEDS FOR DECISION MAKERS: SPECIAL REFERENCE TO WATER

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INTRODUCTION

In this presentation, we discuss how decision-makers need to be informed about the impact of climatic change on water issues in Florida. As providers of information and decision-support, we will answer the following question:

- What information is needed by decision makers to make informed policy decisions?
- What is the role of scientists in the dissemination of information to decision-makers?

We are currently involved in compiling and evaluating information and methods available to address and support informed climate change decision-making processes and policies in Florida. For example:

- Is there a dialogue between scientists and decision- makers?
- Are they discussing the possible impact of climate change on water?
- Are decision-makers expressing to scientists their information needs to help them in policy development?
- What tools do decision-makers need to have at their disposal to properly deal with climate change issues and enact new laws related to water and its effects on the Florida ecosystems?

To address these questions and to discuss the information available to and needed by decision-makers, CES is preparing a statewide conference. This forum will also play an important role in the assessment of the state of knowledge and the decision support resources available in Florida.

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CLIMATE CHANGE PRIORITY AREAS

1. SEA LEVEL RISE

- ***Rethinking coastal development***
- ***Preparing for salt water intrusions***
- ***Dealing with increased storm surge***

Stakeholders: Regional Planning Councils, Water Management Districts, Utilities, State and Local Governments

2. WATER AVAILABILITY

- ***Increased variation – flood and drought***
- ***New problems of water storage***
- ***Water conservation***
- ***Salt water intrusion impact on groundwater***

Stakeholders: Water Management Districts, Utilities, Municipalities, Department of Environmental Protection, Conserve Florida

3. AGRICULTURE

- ***Change in range of crops***
- ***Impact of hurricanes on tree crops***
- ***Increased danger of tropical invasive species***
- ***Impact on cattle and dairy operations***

Stakeholders: Water Management Districts, Department of Agriculture, Farmers

TOOLS

1. Science based information and awareness
2. Interactive information exchange
3. Adaptive management practices
4. Incorporation of climate change issues into decision making process
5. Decision makers forum

CONCLUSIONS

- Need to assess the decision-making priorities in terms of management and planning capabilities of the state of Florida.
- Organize a statewide conference to discuss the information available to and needed by decision-makers.
- Identify current and future planning and decision-making needs based on climate change priority areas impact on water issues over the medium- and long-term.
- Introduce a new thought process to deal with the challenges of climate change in Florida.
- Involve representatives from various local, state and government agencies, academic institutions and many other stakeholders (non-governmental organizations, business community, agriculture sector, etc.).
- Allow for the development of feedback and the definition of key issues in the decision-making process.
- One time baseline efforts need to be followed by ongoing exchange and dialogue.