

BACKGROUNDER
NFWF/LGAC/CRWG Local Government Forum
Building Local Community Resilience Against Climate-Related Flooding
September 24, 2020

This document is intended to provide participants in the Local Government Forum with foundational information and an understanding of the preliminary recommendations for addressing the problem identified below. We ask that all participants review this information in advance and that you come to the meeting prepared to contribute to the development of specific actionable recommendations.

Introduction and Problem Statement

Local elected officials are tasked with protecting the lives, businesses and property of their constituents. For them, the impacts of climate are visible and frequent. Taking action to make communities more resilient is a powerful and pressing need.

What is Climate Resiliency?

In the context of this Forum, climate resilience is the ability to anticipate, prepare for, and respond to hazardous events, trends, or disturbances related to climate. Improving climate resilience involves assessing how climate change will create new, or alter current, climate-related risks, and taking steps to better cope with these risks.

Due to climate change, devastating storms and sea level rise will increasingly threaten vibrant communities, critical infrastructure, and vital natural systems. Cities, regions, and states are facing natural disasters that can have devastating effects on life, property, the economy, and ecosystems. Climate change is already having observable effects on the environment, and past conditions are no longer a reliable indication of the type or

extent of disasters communities will face in the future.

Problem Statement: *As communities face the increasing challenge of climate-related flooding, there is a growing need for local decision makers to harness additional support and resources necessary to effectively prepare for and manage local flooding impacts. Making the case to local, state and federal partners for funding actions tied to improving community resilience is paramount. Climate-related inequities need to be addressed as well as protection of social, economic, and infrastructure assets. Meeting water quantity challenges caused by flooding must be prioritized along with meeting water quality requirements. There is a cost to no action compared to securing resources to prepare for and better respond to flooding impacts.*

Background

The Local Government Advisory Committee (LGAC) raised the issue of significant climate changes and increased local flooding with the Chesapeake Executive Council (EC) in 2019. At the September 5, 2019 meeting of the Chesapeake Executive Council, LGAC called for the EC to hold a watershed wide summit to [consider dual benefits of flood mitigation with Watershed restoration when engaging on local flooding concerns.](#) In response, the Chesapeake Executive Council expressed a willingness to hold this Summit in 2020 or 2021. Meanwhile, LGAC and the Chesapeake Bay Program Climate Resiliency Workgroup (CRW) are hosting this Forum in order to provide the Chesapeake Bay Program leadership with more specific recommendations for addressing climate impacts on local governments.

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One of the Climate Resiliency Workgroup core values is to increase the resilience of the Chesapeake Bay Watershed, including its living resources, habitats, public infrastructure and communities, to withstand adverse impacts from changing environmental and climate conditions. Within the CRWG 2018-2020 Workplan is 3.4, 3.5, 3.6, “Target engagement with educators, business leaders, state, municipalities, and local managers to enable incorporation of climate information/impacts into their decision-making.”

Meeting Goal

By the end of the day, we expect to have specific recommendations for thoughtfully addressing flooding to impacted communities throughout the Chesapeake Bay Watershed.

Assumptions

The Forum Planning Team helped LGAC identify the key barriers to building climate capacity across the region. We developed a set of assumptions to guide and focus the day, since this is a broad topic that involves many partners and varying local demand and supply.

The following are the guiding set of assumptions:

- The amount of research and modeling related to climate impacts is significant and recognized. Findings show increasing concern over dramatic and more frequent flooding, high tides and sea level rise.
- Local government planning for these climate impacts will result in a more efficient, actionable, cost-effective and comprehensive strategy.
- Partnerships are critical in helping many local governments to effectively address flooding by improving funding and capacity.
- Promoting collaboration and cooperation for climate planning and financing across the watershed will aid in this strategy.
- There is no one size fits all approach when it comes to flooding resilience as communities are all unique.
- Local economies and budgets are being challenged now and in the foreseeable future.
- Pursuing projects that provide climate flooding mitigation also provide water quality and natural resource benefits which is a wise use of limited resources. Tying these multiple benefits together are an important aspect that can lead to local support.
- Local capacity and adequate resources to address problems related to climate flooding resilience are extremely limited.
- State policies and assistance to address flooding vary across the watershed
- Promotion of regional partnerships and collaboration do occur and can be effective.