

Climate Change is Here! Adapt or React: Dr. Lynne M. Carter

There are three Key Messages from this presentation:

1. Climate Change is here.
2. Climate change will have consequences for the region and the future will be different than the past.
3. Decisions today can reduce vulnerability through anticipation and action.

Climate change is already here it is not only something to look for in the future. In fact, we are already observing changes. The US has increased its average temperature by 2 degree Fahrenheit (more or less in specific locations), there are more frequent days over 90 degrees, much of our increase in precipitation is coming in heavy downpours, in some places sea level rise is accelerating, warmer oceans contribute to stronger hurricanes and more rainfall, sea ice and glaciers are melting more quickly than our worst case scenarios, and the hardiness zones have moved measurably northward in just the past 15 years.

Climate change will have consequences for the region and the future will be different than the past. Specific local impacts will vary. The impacts from changes in temperature, precipitation, and sea level rise will be experienced in a variety of sectors that will vary by region. Some impacts are already being seen in some of the following areas: health, agriculture, forests, water resources, coastal, and natural resources. The critical message here is that using past climate history will no longer be appropriate to plan for the future.

While there is some change already unavoidable, the decisions that we make today can reduce our vulnerability for the future through anticipation and action. Society has the ability to project likely changes by the use of models and scenarios and we can respond to what they tell us in two ways. We can reduce our use of energy and therefore our release of greenhouse gas emissions and that leads to less climate change (called mitigation) and we can anticipate vulnerabilities and include those in our planning processes (called Adaptation). The Adaptation network works with communities to identify likely vulnerabilities and possible adaptation options to reduce those risks.

Adaptationnetwork.org.