

Local Health Departments are Preparing for the Health Impacts of Climate Change

October 2017

Crook County Health Department

Project Summary

The National Association of County and City Health Officials, with funding from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), selected Crook County Health Department in Oregon as one of 11 local health departments (LHDs) to better understand how city and county health departments are preparing for the health impacts of climate change. The goal of this project was to highlight local efforts to prepare for and build resiliency to the health impacts of climate change and to share these success stories to support new and ongoing initiatives in other LHDs. The project sought to identify best practices and provide real-world case studies. LHDs play an important role in connecting health impacts with the effects of climate change. This project highlights only a few of the many departments actively engaged in climate change efforts.

Background

Crook County, located in the geographic center of Oregon, encompasses 2,982 square miles and is home to 22,570 people.¹ Although considered rural, the county and region have experienced tremendous growth recently. Crook County Health Department, serving the county's residents, is assessing key climate risks, identifying populations most vulnerable to the related health impacts, and formulating adaptation strategies.

Climate Challenge

The environmental and public health consequences of climate change for Crook County include drought and air quality issues. A drought was declared in the area in 2015 and since the county

relies on water for agriculture, livestock, and recreation/tourism, the health department has worked with the community to prepare for such events. The county is also working to build and engage interdisciplinary partnership to further enhance public readiness to take action. If left unaddressed, climate change impacts will continue to affect community health, the local economy, food production, and health care needs.

Goal

The Crook County Health Department strives to increase coordination and community participation in climate work in its jurisdiction. The health department developed several objectives to address this overarching goal and has achieved a number of successes so far.



OBJECTIVES

- Develop strategies for public health staff to be a source of leadership, expertise, and guidance concerning sustainable development in Crook County;
- Raise awareness in Crook County as to the important responsibilities and actions regarding sustainable development and climate change;
- Shape local policy promoting sustainable development and strategizing to mitigate climate change for Crook County; and
- Focus on specific issues identified in Crook County including drought, air quality, and vector-borne and communicable disease.

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Achievements and Successes

- Participated in the CDC BRACE project, completed the local plan, and included the work in the emergency management response plans, focusing specifically on drought;
- Helped the City of Prineville facilitate an ongoing Air Quality Committee; and
- Recognized for climate change efforts in the State of Oregon Plan.²

References

1. United States Census Bureau. Quick Facts webpage. Retrieved September 13, 2017, from <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/US/PST045216>
2. Oregon Health Authority. (2014). *Oregon Climate and Health Profile Report*. Retrieved August 15, 2017, from <http://www.oregon.gov/oha/PH/HEALTHYENVIRONMENTS/CLIMATECHANGE/Documents/oregon-climate-and-health-profile-report.pdf>

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The mission of the National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO) is to be a leader, partner, catalyst, and voice with local health departments.

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