



University of Oregon Environmental Studies Program: Pacific Northwest Tribal Climate Change Project

The University of Oregon's Pacific Northwest Tribal Climate Change Project (TCCP) was created in 2009 to build an understanding of the issues that American Indian and Alaska Native tribes face in addressing climate change. According to researchers from the TCCP, "the environmental impacts of climate change and some of the proposed solutions threaten ways of life, subsistence, land rights, future growth, cultural survivability, and financial resources" of tribes throughout the U.S. The TCCP provides support to tribes on a variety of climate change topics including mitigation and adaptation strategies, natural resource management, climate change policy, and social equity. The project is a collaboration between the University of Oregon's Environmental Studies Program and the USDA Forest Service's Pacific Northwest Research Station.

A primary objective of the project is to foster meaningful opportunities for tribes to have a voice in the development of climate change strategies at the national, regional, state or local level. The lack of these opportunities demonstrates a fundamental inequity in climate change issues that has prompted the TCCP to adopt innovative mechanisms for increased tribal involvement in climate policy and programs. In their efforts to foster meaningful involvement, the TCCP conducts research and develops resources to assist tribal, inter-tribal, governmental agencies and NGOs in addressing the impacts of climate change on tribes in the United States. The TCCP convenes the Pacific Northwest Tribal Climate Change Network, publishes tribal climate change profiles, and generates research publications. In addition, the organization has hosted training events for tribal environmental and natural resource professionals. A brief overview on each of these initiatives is provided below. For more information, please visit the Pacific Northwest Tribal Climate Change Program website at: <http://tribalclimate.uoregon.edu/>.



Willamette National Forest, Oregon.
Photo credit: USDA Forest Service, Willamette National Forest.

Key Research Areas

1. Climate change impacts on tribal culture and sovereignty

The TCCP is actively working to mainstream and broaden the dialogue related to the impacts of climate change on tribal culture and sovereignty. The team recently released a draft report, which examines federal consultation policies in a climate change context.

This report seeks to demonstrate the importance of the government-to-government relationships in addressing issues pertaining to climate change, including consultation, as well as collaborative approaches between federal agencies and tribes.

2. Understanding the role of traditional ecological knowledge in addressing climate change

Traditional ecological knowledge (TEK), the indigenous way of knowing, has the potential to play a central role in both indigenous and nonindigenous climate change initiatives. The detection of environmental changes, the development of strategies to adapt to these changes, and the implementation of sustainable land-management principles are all important climate action items that can be informed by TEK. Although there is a significant body of literature on traditional knowledge, the TCCP has focused on the relationship between TEK and climate change. To that end, the TCCP recently developed a paper examining these issues and describing the potential role of TEK in climate change assessment and adaptation efforts. Publication of this report, *Exploring the Role of Traditional Ecological Knowledge in Climate Change Initiatives*, is forthcoming.



Kirsten Vinyeta, a graduate research fellow with the PNW TCCP, presents her research findings at the August 2012 Traditional Knowledge Summit.

The Pacific Northwest Tribal Climate Change Network

The PNW Tribal Climate Change Network was created in 2009 as the result of a need for increased communication and coordination among tribes in the Pacific Northwest about climate change issues identified during two tribal climate change workshops held in Oregon. Since 2009, the network has served as a setting for tribal leaders and staff, as well as non-tribal organizations, to discuss and provide input on matters related to climate change. Inaugurated in 2009, the Network fosters communication between tribes, agencies, and other entities about climate change policies, programs, and research needs pertaining to tribes and climate change. Currently, the network has over 50 participating organizations from tribal, public, academic, and non-profit sectors.

Tribal Profiles

The TCCP team has produced numerous tribal profiles as a means of showcasing both the challenges climate change poses to tribal communities, and the innovative adaptation and mitigation strategies that have been adopted by tribes across the country. Each profile details the efforts of individual tribes who are redefining the capacity for development of climate change solutions. The profiles address a host of climate-induced environmental changes as well as the regionally specific solutions that are being applied to address the impacts of climate change.

Completed Profiles:

To date, the TCCP team has produced 10 tribal profiles:

- Vulnerability of Coastal Louisiana Tribes in a Climate Change Context
- First Stewards Symposium: Coastal Peoples Address Climate Change
- Siletz Tribal Energy Program
- Karuk Tribe: Integrating Traditional Ecological Knowledge within Natural Resource Management
- First Foods and Climate Change
- The Lummi Nation: Pursuing Clean Renewable Energy
- Climate Change: Realities of Relocation for Alaska Native Villages
- Swinomish Climate Change Initiative: At the Forefront of Planning for Climate Change
- Climate Change and the Coquille Indian Tribe: Planning for the Effects of Climate Change and Reducing Greenhouse Gas Emissions
- Nez Perce Tribe: Carbon Sequestration Program

The tribal profiles are available on the TCCP website:

<http://tribalclimate.uoregon.edu/tribal-profiles/> as well as on the Tribes & Climate Change website that is maintained by the Institute for Tribal Environmental Professionals at Northern Arizona University: <http://www4.nau.edu/tribalclimatechange/>.

Publications

All publications produced by the TCCP group are publically available and downloadable at <http://tribalclimate.uoregon.edu/publications/>.

- ***Fostering Tribal Engagement in Climate Science Centers and Landscape Conservation Cooperatives (Draft publication released in October, 2012)***

This publication describes the policy language related to tribal engagement in Climate Science Centers (CSC) and Landscape Conservation Cooperatives (LCC), examines the Government-to-Government relationship in context of CSCs and LCCs, and discusses the benefits to Tribes and the federal government in having strong tribal engagement in these initiatives. The paper is intended to foster dialogue about the need for and opportunities to meaningfully engage Tribes in the implementation of these initiatives.

- ***Tribal Climate Change Funding Guide***

The Pacific Northwest Tribal Climate Change Project at the University of Oregon and the Environmental Protection Agency, Region 10 Tribal Program Office developed this guide collaboratively. The guide is intended to provide up-to-date information on grants that may assist tribes in addressing climate change through a broad range of sectors. To access this guide, visit:



Lehua Ka'uhane, a recent graduate of the University of Hawai'i at Manoa Environmental Law Program, presents her research examining strategies for climate change mitigation and adaptation that incorporate the perspectives of indigenous peoples during a student panel presentation.

<http://envs.uoregon.edu/tribal-climate/>.

- ***Exploring the Role of Traditional Ecological Knowledge in Climate Change Initiatives***

This synthesis explores the role of TEK in climate change assessments, planning and management. The report includes various examples of indigenous groups, agencies and organizations incorporating TEK into various types of research, education and resource planning efforts. This paper will be published by the USDA Forest Service as a General Technical Report in 2013.

- ***The Government-to-Government Relationship in a Changing Climate: A review of federal consultation policies***

This report examines the scope of federal consultation policies in the context of climate change and highlights specific policies that have the potential to strengthen federal-tribal efforts to address climate change.

- ***A Guide for Tribal Leaders on U.S. Climate Change Programs***

This guide summarizes key U.S. government programs addressing climate change, opportunities for tribal engagement, and contacts for each agency. The guide also includes tribal, academic, and non-governmental agencies and programs to assist tribes in addressing climate change.

- ***Social Vulnerability and Equity in the United States in the Context of Climate Change***

This synthesis of literature illustrates information about the socioeconomic, political, health, and cultural effects of climate change on socially vulnerable populations in the United States, with some additional examples in Canada. Through this synthesis, social vulnerability, equity, and climate justice are defined and described, and key issues, themes, and considerations that pertain to the effects of climate change on socially vulnerable populations are identified. The synthesis reviews what available science says about social vulnerability and climate change and documents the emergence of issues not currently addressed in academic literature.

Tribal Climate Change Project Events

Indigenous Peoples and Climate Change Symposia – May 2012 and April 2013

In May 2012, the University of Oregon hosted a student-focused symposium on indigenous peoples and climate change. The conference and pursuant dialogue sparked great interest among students, faculty and members of the community in understanding the issues facing indigenous peoples from climate change. The symposium on Indigenous Peoples and Climate Change focused on the disproportionate impacts facing indigenous peoples in the Americas, as well as the



Daniel Wildcat and Larry Mercurieff in the Many Nations Longhouse speaking at the keynote address for the Indigenous Peoples and Climate Change Conference at the University of Oregon in May 2012.

strategies and innovative solutions that American Indian and Alaska Native tribes are developing in their communities.

The event featured keynote addresses by Dr. Daniel Wildcat from Haskell Indian Nations University and Larry Mercurieff with Seven Generations Consulting. The conference focused on facilitating interaction and increasing knowledge among native and non-native communities on climate change, environmental, and cultural issues. The conference fostered discourse between indigenous leaders and students and placed issues about climate change and indigenous peoples into a comparative international context (by focusing on issues throughout the Americas). Finally, the conference provided opportunities for undergraduate students to present research and gain professional experience.

In recognition of the growing interest in understanding the issues facing indigenous people from climate change, the University of Oregon will host a second symposium in April 2013 featuring Dr. Frank Kanawha Lake, Research Ecologist with the USDA Forest Service, Pacific Southwest Research Station and Dr. Kyle Powys Whyte of Michigan State University. The keynote address will bring together University students, faculty, and members of the community to examine climate impacts on indigenous peoples and climate change.

For more information on these events, visit: <http://uoclimateconference.wordpress.com/>.

October 2009: Tribal Climate Change Forum

The Tribal Climate Change Forum focused on the role of tribal sovereignty and tribal needs as well as on opportunities in climate change policy and action. The event was held in Eugene, Oregon and was convened by the USDA Forest Service Pacific Northwest Research Station and the University of Oregon Environmental and Natural Resources Law Program. Proceedings from this forum are available at: <http://tribalclimate.uoregon.edu/files/2010/11/TCC-Forum-proceedings-12-2-09v2.pdf>.

September 2009: Tribal Climate Change Policy Training

The TCCP Training convened tribal decision-makers and staff from Oregon, Washington, Idaho, and Northern California to provide education on the technical aspects of climate change policy, as well as the opportunities that tribes have to engage in climate change policy and action at tribal, national, and international levels. The training was held at the University of Oregon in Portland and convened by Sustainable Northwest, the USDA Forest Service Pacific Northwest Research Station, and the University of Oregon. <http://www.sustainablenorthwest.org/programs/policy/tribal-climate-change-policy-training-meeting-materials>

For more information:

Pacific Northwest Tribal Climate Change Project website:
<http://tribalclimate.uoregon.edu/>

Pacific Northwest Tribal Climate Change Project, Tribal Profiles:
<http://tribalclimate.uoregon.edu/tribal-profiles/>

TCCP Contact:

Kathy Lynn
Tribal Climate Change Project Coordinator
Environmental Studies Program
University of Oregon
kathy@uoregon.edu

Photos courtesy of the University of Oregon Tribal Climate Change Project.

Cristina González-Maddux, Institute for Tribal Environmental Professionals, and Matt Cohen, Climate Change Program Assistant, developed this profile for the Institute for Tribal Environmental Professionals. This profile was created with support from USDA Forest Service, Rocky Mountain Research Station.

The profile is available on the Tribes & Climate Change website: www4.nau.edu/tribalclimatechange/. The tribal climate change profiles featured on the website are intended as a pathway to increasing knowledge among tribal and non-tribal organizations about climate change mitigation and adaptation efforts.

For more information, contact:

- Sue Wotkyns, Climate Change Program Manager, Institute for Tribal Environmental Professionals, susan.wotkyns@nau.edu
- Mehrdad Khatibi, Director, Institute for Tribal Environmental Professionals, mehrdad.khatibi@nau.edu