

FLOODS AND DROUGHT

TACKLING WILD WEATHER

WORKSHOP SUMMARY REPORT

On March 15, 2017, Fraser Basin Council hosted the “Floods and Drought: Tackling Wild Weather” workshop in Fort St. John. The purpose of the workshop was to reflect upon and address the extreme events that have impacted communities and critical infrastructure in the Northeast region. This introductory workshop highlighted the future climate trends for Northeast BC and how existing online tools can support adaptation. Presenters shared their experiences with climate risk assessments of highway infrastructure, community flood response and collaborative drought management.

This workshop is part of Fraser Basin Council’s BC Regional Adaptation Collaborative program, supported by Natural Resources Canada and the BC Ministry of Environment.

This report is a summary of the key issues and ideas that the workshop participants identified and discussed.

For more information about this event or the BC RAC program, please contact Eliana Chia at 604-488-5377 or echia@fraserbasin.bc.ca.





WHAT MORE CLIMATE INFO OR KNOWLEDGE DO WE NEED?

CLIMATE AND ENVIRONMENTAL DATA

There is the need for more monitoring data, including a better established weather monitoring network across the Peace region as well as increased monitoring of stream flow, especially of small tributaries. Participants are looking for increased access to data on climate forecasts. The data that exists is currently in silos through different sectors and organizations. The interpretation of climate results by separate groups has led to inconsistent messaging. Participants want up-to-date mapping of the cumulative impacts of industrial activity on land and feel that all industries need to be more active in contributing data.

GLOBAL CONTEXT

Participants identified that it would be useful to know how local mitigation efforts fit into the larger global picture, particularly within the context of the Paris Agreement.

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

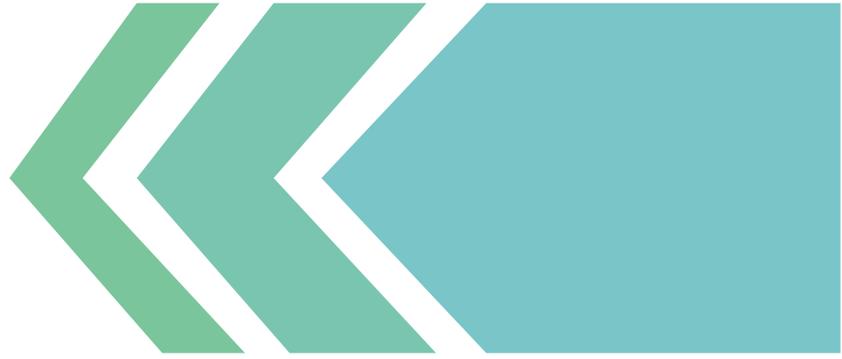
Additional education is needed on how to plan for large extreme events, such as 1 in 100 year events. Participants are looking for more information on the most effective protective measures against flooding.

PUBLIC OUTREACH STRATEGIES

There needs to be better communication of existing regulations to the general public. For example, water restrictions are seen as automatic so they become largely ignored. Participants want more opportunities to learn about how to effectively engage residents on climate change.



WHAT IS ALREADY HAPPENING IN THE NORTHEAST FOR ADAPTATION?



AGRICULTURE SECTOR

The agricultural sector is engaged in weather monitoring through placing weather stations around the Peace region in order to help farmers make management decisions. Other agriculture monitoring activities include analyzing irrigation and pests and diseases. The sector has created prediction models for pests and diseases.

WATERSHED MANAGEMENT

Dawson Creek is working on identifying new priorities for watershed management. The region is active in ground water modeling to identify risks and Geoscience BC is working on mapping aquifers in the North Peace.

OIL AND GAS INDUSTRY

Oil and Gas companies are evaluating ice road access in the context of climate change. When there are no ice roads, some campsites are unable to operate. They are exploring paying for the building of permanent roads to decrease their reliance on ice roads.

PLANNING AND ENGINEERING

The Peace River Regional District is updating their development permit areas to create set back requirements along the Peace River (eg. Old Fort) for erosion. There have been changes to engineering bylaws to allow for larger storm drains.

FORESTRY SECTOR

On the provincial level, the Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resources Operations is working on their Strategic Monitoring Plan.



HOW DO WE MOVE FORWARD IN NORTHEAST BC TO ADAPT?

COLLABORATION BETWEEN SECTORS

Participants would like to see more collaboration between sectors and communication about each sector's initiatives in adaptation. This can increase understanding of the diverse challenges faced by different sectors. We need to strengthen connections between key staff working on climate risk across organizations. It can be difficult to know who to contact in an organization due to high turnover of staff, and so it would be helpful to maintain an updated staff directory so that people are aware of who they need to talk to. One recommendation to facilitate collaboration is to bring municipalities together under the PRRD and FBC through a staff and politically driven working group, which would implement action at the staff level.

UNDERSTANDING OUR VULNERABILITY

We need an improved understanding of the cumulative effects in the region from industrial practices. This is an ongoing process explored in the region. One suggestion for a next step is to conduct a vulnerability assessment of Highway 97 using the PIEVC Protocol process, which would be co-led by MOTI and Engineers Canada.

ENGAGE THE PUBLIC

Engage in creative communications strategies to get the public excited about adaptation. Make elected officials more aware and responsible for climate change impacts so that they can communicate these risks to the public and prioritize adaptation. Explore social media as a channel for communications. Address barriers for people who want to help with emergencies but are not allowed to. Build the capacity of rural resident volunteers to respond to extreme events through a partnership with the Province.

ACCESS TO DATA

Identify what data people want, where it is, and have it compiled in one portal or accessible through one point person. Create an outline or map on how to find data. Gather more data on cumulative effects and ensure all necessary sectors are contributing.