



119 Washington Avenue, Suite 1G
Albany, NY 12210
518.432.1405
info@aceny.org | www.aceny.org

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[Climate Action Council - June 8, 2021](#)

By Jeff Jones

Originally scheduled as a working session with the Climate Justice Working Group (CJWG), this meeting of the CAC featured a report from the Adaptation and Resilience Working Group (ARWG), which has functioned as a subgroup of the Land Use & Local Government Advisory Panel. The first of several meetings with the CJWG is now scheduled for June 28th.

For reference, ARWG representatives cited needed updating of New York's 2014 Community Risk and Resilience Act (CRRRA). Divided into 5 categories, the CRRRA requires state agencies to consider 5 threat categories when developing state programs and policy. These are:

- DEC developed science-based sea-level rise projections;
- consideration of sea-level rise, storm surge and flooding in facility siting, permitting and funding;
- smart growth public infrastructure policy act criteria;
- model local laws concerning climate risk;
- and guidance and natural resiliency measures.

Based on their research, the ARWG estimates that without updating, implementation of the current CRRRA could lead to warming of more than 3.1 percent by the end of the century. That is way beyond stated goals of 1.5 percent. Not only do current programs need updating, but they need to apply to all state agencies.

Concerns and recommendations cited by the working group include recognition that flooding – from sea-level rise and strengthening on-shore storms – is New York's "most impactful" climate hazard. Updated mapping is required in large part because Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) flood maps are out of date.

Dealing with flood risk impacts on buildings and housing is also a priority, although extreme heat impacts lead to the deaths of more New Yorkers annually than floods.

Other significant measures identified by the working group include the electrification of the transportation sector, protection of smaller forest parcels – to help retain carbon sequestration – and increased prioritization of water protection programs like the state’s Water Quality Improvement Program (WQIP). The working group also highlighted the particular vulnerabilities of disadvantaged communities.

In discussion after the presentation, CAC members questioned or highlighted several areas of concern. These included:

- recognizing the economic benefits of growing New York’s clean-energy manufacturing sector;
- community-based education programs to help empower New Yorkers to engage more effectively in climate-related decision making;
- deeper understanding of historic mistakes in building housing in areas that are and will be geographically threatened by sea-level rise and inland flooding;
- and additional questions about the need to decarbonize the energy system.