



## Understanding the Urban-Rural Connection

November 5, 2015 | Sacramento

*J. London: "Water flows downhill, but money doesn't flow uphill."*

---

### Workshop Summary

ARCCA's immediate next step will be to develop a whitepaper on how urban and rural systems are connected and where the State should make investments that will yield the greatest benefit.

#### 1. How do you define the urban-rural connection and why is it important?

- There are different kinds of rural environments such as coastal rural, forest rural, urban fringe and agricultural rural. Rural also doesn't automatically fall under "economically disadvantaged."
- Rural communities don't know how to engage with state agencies
  - Many rural communities are not part of MPOs or regional planning agencies.
  - Rural communities that are part of MPOs or regional planning agencies still struggle to compete for funding with urban cities.
- There are inherent connections between urban and rural areas (e.g. watersheds), but the connection is fragile. Urban and rural areas need each other, but it's a matter of figuring out how to best collaborate.
- There is an incentive for both urban and rural areas to invest in solutions for climate adaptation: crossover of air pollution from rural to urban (wildfires) and urban to rural (congestion).

#### 2. What areas and efforts are ripe for urban-rural collaboration?

- Enact a public goods charge to connect the urban and rural constituents and to fund work in the forests and watersheds.
  - A shared charge that puts value on a public good or asset (water).
  - Would apply to everyone in California that relies on the water supply.
  - An equitable way to distribute the costs of restoration work.
  - The PUC could put this forward for water.
- Education and outreach to teach people where their water comes from and connecting that to the benefits of preserving these regions and watersheds. Private landowners should also be influenced to be stewards of the environment and resources that impact downstream urban regions.
- Recycled water can be a strategy to reduce stress on the State's water supply while meeting the demands of urban users.
- Expand our understanding of water collection facilities to include forests, meadows and natural stormwater retention habitats. We need to better understand how ecosystems will respond to higher water retention.
- Greater support for biomass in rural areas – make subsidies available for locally-produced clean energy, and procure biomass chips for landscaping and erosion control.

- The State Groundwater Management Act designates basins that span various jurisdictional boundaries, which will create an opportunity for political collaboration.
- Integrated Water Management Planning – brings together state agencies that touch on water and also works within water agencies to increase integration and collaboration.
- SB 246 creates a technical advisory committee that meets once a quarter, which will create opportunities for aligning local/regional and state actions.
- There is an opportunity for the next investment plan to address equity issues and demonstrate GHG reduction benefits in rural communities in order to gain funding.

### **3. What will it take to initiate and implement collaborative planning?**

- Funding can bring people from different agencies together to work collaboratively on issues.
- Show jurisdictions how they can avoid costs (infrastructure, etc) by preserving land for groundwater recharge.
- Connect resiliency and adaptation to economic development and growth:
  - Growth in urban areas takes away from agriculture and urban fringe communities – we need to think strategically about growth: conservation, stewardship, smart growth land use strategies, financial mechanisms, etc.
  - Agriculture, housing and transportation all need funding to provide opportunity for pushing smart growth options that can save future costs.
- Understanding of political and social science needed to understand how to speak to and engage policymakers (reassure elected that they will be safe in upcoming elections).
  - White populations least likely to believe we need climate action, but Latinos most engaged and concerned (implications with rise of Latino voters).
  - Business leaders also vocal when climate change impacts their businesses (smoke, flooding).
  - Target the right constituencies and make the connection between real, physical impacts and climate action.

### **4. What do we need to know to make urban-rural collaboration effective?**

- Proper understanding of who the partners are and what their needs are.
- Urban areas need to plan for the future and shouldn't rely on the existing human infrastructure in the Sierras, but should invest in resilience infrastructure closer to where the resources are consumed.
- Collaborators need a regional venue to explore and implement solutions to respond to climate impacts – a place-based program to cross sectors and jurisdictions.
- Expansion of tools to show policymakers about the importance (in terms of cost, resources, etc.) of investment in watersheds Urban areas need to plan for the future and shouldn't rely on the existing human infrastructure in the Sierras, but should invest in resilience infrastructure closer to where the resources are consumed.
- Better quantification of the benefits that rural areas provide urban areas.
- Program implementers need good projects for rural areas and good models for what certain smart growth projects look like in different communities.
- A report of what we already know that can be made available to policymakers to encourage policy change. The report should identify the climate impacts that have real implications (e.g. wildfire smoke impacting businesses).
- More knowledge of water flow and resources (particularly groundwater) in order to create water budgets, also making sure to take historical droughts/wet periods into account.