



# ARCCA

Alliance of Regional Collaboratives  
for Climate Adaptation

May 31, 2023

Neil Matouka  
Fifth Climate Change Assessment Program Manager  
Governor's Office of Planning and Research (OPR)  
1400 Tenth Street  
Sacramento, CA 95814

## RE: Fifth Assessment Regional Report RFI

Dear Neil Matouka and OPR Staff:

The Alliance of Regional Collaboratives for Climate Adaptation (ARCCA) welcomes the opportunity to provide comments in response to the Fifth Assessment Regional Report RFI.

[ARCCA](#) is a California-based network of regional climate collaboratives – each encompassing a diverse, multisector network of agencies and organizations working together to accelerate climate adaptation throughout their region and to catalyze on-the-ground resiliency-building initiatives. As a statewide network, ARCCA brings together thought leaders and practitioners to advocate for equitable and effective adaptation principles and policies, to collaborate towards innovative and holistic solutions, and to build a culture of prioritizing climate and community resilience. Our member collaboratives represent the following regions: North Coast, Sierra Nevada, Greater Sacramento Area, San Francisco Bay Area, Central Coast, Los Angeles County, Inland Southern California, and San Diego County. ARCCA is a coalition program of [CivicWell](#), a 501(c)3 nonprofit working to create livable communities throughout California by advancing policies, connecting leaders, and implementing solutions. ARCCA is also an implementing partner of the [California Resilience Partnership](#).

We respectfully offer our comments and recommendations to support the development of the research framework and process for the Regional Synthesis Reports of California's Fifth Climate Change Assessment. Our comments are intended to reflect our network's collective experiences working to advance climate adaptation efforts at the regional scale, as well as the diverse priorities, needs, and perspectives of ARCCA regions and the local adaptation practitioners participating in ARCCA member regional collaboratives. While our network includes over 300 individual public agencies, organizations, businesses, and academic institutions from across the state, the comments provided in this letter are not necessarily endorsed by each of our individual members.



**CIVICWELL**  
Transforming Local Vision into Action  
Formerly Local Government Commission (LGC)



## Overarching Comments

First, we would like to thank OPR and the Fifth Assessment Team, particularly Neil Matouka, for their thoughtful approach to the Fifth Assessment, a highly anticipated endeavor by California’s climate community and an initiative that ARCCA advocated for in previous State budget cycles. The OPR team and Mr. Matouka have remained highly responsive throughout the design and development of the Fifth Assessment and we express our deep gratitude for your proactive and ongoing attention to engaging a diverse set of stakeholders, particularly those who have not had the opportunity to engage in State-funded research, and to making community engagement a critical component of this Assessment.

We are very pleased to see the inclusion of Regional Synthesis Reports as part of the Fifth Assessment and the intentional way in which the reports’ design and approach are being considered. We greatly appreciate that compensation will be provided to support the development of the regional reports, unlike the Fourth Assessment.

### A. Collaborative Structure

*1. Considering the Fifth Assessment priorities to include diverse expertise and perspectives in the development of the regional reports, what expertise are needed to inform the scope of each regional report? Please include the types of organizations, communities or individuals that can provide these expertise, where applicable.*

- Including the perspectives of community-based organizations, tribal communities, and embedded community leaders will be essential to the development of regional reports. To ensure authentic engagement and avoid a disjointed or piecemeal approach, community leaders should be engaged throughout the Fifth Assessment, not solely in the production of regional reports. We strongly recommend centering research activities in [Participatory Science](#), which is crucial to developing actionable research that uplifts local and regional knowledge and supports the development of equitable and effective climate adaptation and community resilience strategies, projects, and programs.

*2. Does your organization have experience managing large teams that include non-academic partners, including but not limited to tribal and local community partners? If yes, what collaborative structure does your organization utilize to incorporate diverse expertise?*

- Since the formation of ARCCA over 10 years ago, we have operated as a “collaborative of collaboratives,” working in close partnership with regional collaboratives, their local members, and statewide and national partners to advance our shared goals. ARCCA now represents eight leading regional collaboratives encompassing over 300 unique and diverse local, regional, and statewide agencies, organizations, businesses, and professional associations. We respectfully share a few high-level recommendations for effective and inclusive collaborative structures based on our experience:

- A shared set of values, definitions, objectives, and roles are critical to support collaborative efforts. Taking the time necessary to establish a shared understanding, early on and by consensus, will provide clarity and help to cultivate a collaborative environment. These should also be revisited throughout the project term to ensure that shared values are upheld and partners are in agreement with the project direction; the frequency can range from quarterly to annually based on the level of trust established among partners.
- Appointing a single point-of-contact as the lead coordinator who is experienced in project management and respected by project partners will support smooth administration and execution. This coordinator should also be a skilled facilitator who can step back or step in, as needed, to uphold a collaborative environment, uplift the leadership and expertise of partners, and create space for marginalized voices to engage fully in dialogues, discussions, and decisions.
- Large teams that include diverse organizations that hold varying degrees of comfort, power, authority, and influence require special attention. Establishing clear rules of engagement and decision-making structures, always by consensus, can serve as a foundation for balancing group dynamics. Additional strategies can be deployed, such as speaking order, to ensure non-academic partners are fully empowered and supported to contribute their expertise.
- We also recommend reviewing other best practices and emerging collaborative stakeholder models, such as the Community Economic Resilience Fund (CERF) process or from SGC's Regional Climate Collaboratives (RCC) program, for additional insights and replicable models for the Fifth Assessment.

3. *What geographies does your organization serve? Please note whether the geographies match or overlap with one or multiple California Climate Assessment regions (per Figure 1).*

- The regional boundaries of ARCCA member collaboratives have been defined organically by the local and regional partners of each collaborative as part of their collaborative's formation process. While we recognize the challenges associated with defining regional boundaries, we strongly recommend establishing Fifth Assessment regions in ways that reflect existing regional efforts, to the extent possible, to support the development of actionable research. The geographic scope of each of ARCCA's member regional collaboratives, from north to south, are as follows, which can also be seen on this [map](#). Please note that ARCCA does not yet represent the entire state and some collaboratives have overlapping boundaries.
  - [North Coast Resource Partnership \(NCRP\)](#): Counties of Del Norte, Siskiyou, Modoc, Humboldt, Trinity, Mendocino, and Sonoma

- [Sierra Climate Adaptation and Mitigation Partnership \(Sierra CAMP\)](#): Counties of Lassen, Plumas, Sierra, Nevada, El Dorado, Alpine, Amador, Calvares, Tuolumne, and Mariposa; eastern portions of the counties of Modoc, Madera, Fresno, Tulare; western portions of the counties of Shasta, Tehama, Butte, Yuba, Placer, Mono, Inyo; and northern portions of the County of Kern
- [Capital Region Climate Readiness Collaborative \(CRCRC\)](#): Counties of Yuba, Placer, Sutter, El Dorado, Yolo, and Sacramento
- [Bay Area Climate Adaptation Network \(BayCAN\)](#): Sonoma, Napa, Marin, Solano, Contra Costa, Alameda, San Francisco, San Mateo, and Santa Clara counties
- [Central Coast Climate Collaborative \(4C\)](#): Counties of Santa Cruz, San Benito, Monterey, San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara, and Ventura
- [Inland Southern California Climate Collaborative \(ISC3\)](#): Counties of San Bernardino, Riverside, and Imperial
- [Los Angeles Regional Collaborative for Climate Action and Sustainability \(LARC\)](#): County of Los Angeles
- [San Diego Regional Climate Collaborative \(SDRCC\)](#): County of San Diego

4. *Community engagement is critical to informing all Fifth Assessment processes and research. Please describe any additional methods or opportunities to bring diverse expertise and perspectives into the scoping and development of each regional report.*

- We have found that community engagement is successful when trusted communicators and local leaders are at the forefront. We recommend research efforts and the development of regional synthesis reports to be led by a collaboration of trusted community-based organizations, tribal groups, local agencies, and regional networks. A diverse coalition of outreach partners can be effective in communicating scientific findings and policy recommendations in ways that can be more readily received by different audiences.
- Under-resourced organizations, particularly Tribes, Native-led organizations, and community-based organizations, should be sufficiently funded to perform outreach activities. Although not as severe, it is also important to recognize the growing resource constraints faced by other types of organizations, including regional collaboratives, nonprofits, and local government agencies.
- It is important to consider that there is no one-size-fits-all approach to community engagement. For example, rural and tribal communities require in-person engagement as remote events may not be culturally appropriate or as successful due to issues of broadband access and other resource constraints.

- There is now a plethora of guides, toolkits, and resources on authentic, inclusive, and effective community engagement that can be reviewed to shape the Fifth Assessment’s approach. One resource we recommend is the [Living Infrastructure Field Kit](#) developed by Accelerate Resilience L.A. This free, open-source, virtual toolkit includes a visioning tool designed to support community-driven planning processes and document community preferences, needs, and opportunities in a visual database.

## B. Regional Themes

Please note that our comments in this section are not comprehensive and do not reflect *all* regional themes across ARCCA member regions. While we elevate a few key comments here, we welcome an opportunity for further discussion where our regional representatives can relay additional information and help address any gaps following the close of this RFI.

### 1. What additional general themes are important to address throughout the regional reports?

- We recommend addressing the secondary and tertiary effects of climate change impacts and climate-induced disasters. For example, the secondary effects of landslides and flooding resulting from wildfires and record high levels of rain, and the tertiary effects of reduced agricultural yields and large-scale migration resulting from polluted floodwaters.
- We also recommend an analysis of climate impacts on the regional economy to help regions prepare for economic impacts and identify strategies that are mutually beneficial for both climate resilience and economic prosperity. While it is well-understood by climate practitioners that early action will avoid greater adaptation and disaster recovery costs in the future, cost-benefit analyses on specific climate adaptation measures based on the timing of implementation would help decision-makers facing resource constraints in determining investment priorities.
- Ecosystem services is another important theme to address throughout the regional reports – for regions that steward natural resources and regions that benefit from ecosystem services. We recommend evaluating the cost of ecosystem degradation to explore how less snowpack in the Sierras will impact 60% of the state’s drinking water and quantifying these impacts to ensure rural, forested regions with low populations are prioritized for their critical role in preserving and restoring the ecosystems that California’s diverse communities, flora, and fauna rely upon. With that said, we believe in the inherent value of natural ecosystems and resources and caution enormous care to be taken in how ecosystem impacts are quantified.
  - Regional reports should also include a discussion on the impact variable precipitation patterns, including extensive drought conditions and heavy rainfall, will have on local and downstream communities. This should include effective strategies to increase water storage infrastructure, prioritizing nature-based solutions.

*2. How should each regional report use Fifth Assessment downscaled global climate change projections and modeling on wildfire, hydrology, and sea level rise?*

- We recommend regional reports to offer top-line assessments to help users understand the greatest climate risks and adaptation priorities in each region. For example, the impact of extreme heat to human health and the economy will be far greater than any other impact in the Los Angeles region over the next few decades. However, this message could be easily lost if it is only included in a long list of findings.
- We also recommend identifying key localized risks and vulnerabilities that could have significant implications at the regional scale.

*3. What other data or knowledge(s) are needed to inform each regional report?*

- We are very supportive of the prioritization of Tribal Research as part of the Fifth Assessment and urge the full integration of Traditional Knowledge and Tribal Research Program findings into all regional reports.
- To support an actionable set of regional reports, it would be helpful to include information on the jurisdiction of existing governing and regulating bodies, including Tribal, local, regional, and State agencies, that clearly define the authority and/or responsibility of each in implementing different types of adaptation measures. This could also include information on overlapping jurisdictions where coordination is critical, as well as gaps in governance that may need to be addressed to support accelerated and effective implementation.
  - Additionally, distributed, parcel-scale opportunities to enhance resilience (e.g., rebates for landscape transformation, home retrofits, etc.) would be helpful to include. Implementing projects on public property alone will not be sufficient to address the climate crisis and safeguard Californians with significant amounts of land owned privately.
- Better quality data regarding soil and infiltration rates are needed for regions throughout California. Data on trees and plants that can support each region through heat, drought, and flood impacts based on the region's current and changing climate conditions would also be helpful, particularly to inform nursery stock.
- Some regions, such as the Sierra Nevada, lack data on the region's demographics, air quality, and groundwater.

## C. Local Issues

Please note that our comments in this section are not comprehensive and do not reflect *all* local issues across ARCCA member regions. While we elevate a few key comments here, we welcome an opportunity for further discussion where our regional representatives can relay additional information and help address any gaps following the close of this RFI.

1. *What local issues should be considered for a given region, based on the California Climate Assessment regions to the right and in Figure 1?*

- The Sierra Nevada is the largest region depicted in the figure and represents extreme variations in elevations, landscapes, and population levels and demographics. This region's report should be segmented by subregion in order for key climate data and impacts to be meaningfully discussed and to ensure research findings are easily navigable, relevant, and actionable.
  - Furthermore, identifying subregions that could benefit from large-scale investments would be helpful for each regional report. We recommend taking into account community capacity, adaptive capacity, economic drivers, and readiness to receive implementation funds as part of this analysis.
- Recreation and natural resource-based economies in rural regions, particularly the Sierra Nevada, would be important to consider as significant impacts of climate change.
- Climate change denial is extremely present in many regions, particularly rural regions, regions that span urban/rural boundaries, and politically diverse regions. Partnering with respected local groups to communicate climate hazards will be essential to effectively engage key stakeholders – from community members to elected officials to industry leaders. Leading with economic benefits and threats, rather than climate change, has served as a successful strategy for promoting mitigation and adaptation actions.
- In Figure 1, Ventura County is included in the Los Angeles region. We recommend moving Ventura County into the Central Coast region, a recommendation supported by the County of Ventura Sustainability Division staff. Ventura County and organizations within the county are more closely associated with Central Coast counties and organizations (e.g., Central Coast Climate Collaborative, Tri-County Regional Energy Network, etc.), and have characteristics more closely aligned with the Central Coast than the Los Angeles region (i.e., more agricultural region with open space and rural areas vs. urban sprawl).

2. *How should the Fifth Assessment regional reports consider trans-boundary issues (e.g., watersheds, critical infrastructure, and other natural, built, or cultural features spanning multiple regions)?*

- We recommend including trans-boundary issues in each regional report through different lenses that would be relevant to different stakeholders. This should include a watershed approach to acknowledge the nested and interrelated nature of various issues.
- It is also important to consider the boundaries of land ownership and agency jurisdiction. The patchwork of land ownership and jurisdictional authority can make implementation difficult at the landscape scale.

## Other Recommendations

- We see the Fifth Assessment as a tremendous opportunity to educate government staff, elected officials, policymakers, and decision-makers at all levels, local to State, to support a common understanding of the basic science underlying climate change. In addition to the regional reports, we recommend developing a targeted resource for policymakers that clearly and unequivocally communicates climate facts – from Earth’s energy budget to the concept of climate inertia and the delayed impacts thereof. A wide range of trusted and influential partners should be recruited to support dissemination, including faith-based organizations, labor unions, media outlets, and other groups with established relationships with key decision-makers.
- To inform the final set of research topics for the Fifth Assessment, we suggest reviewing the identified gaps and research limitations from the Fourth Assessment, such as air quality, to shape research priorities. We also recommend engaging with public research institutions to understand their current and planned research projects to address remaining gaps through the Fifth Assessment. We recognize that these are steps that may have already been taken.

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the Fifth Assessment Regional Report RFI and provide our comments. We greatly appreciate your time in considering our recommendations and look forward to working in partnership with OPR to support California’s Fifth Climate Change Assessment. Please do not hesitate to reach out to Julianna DeNike at [jdenuke@civicwell.org](mailto:jdenuke@civicwell.org) if you would like to discuss any of our comments further or if you have any questions.

Respectfully,



Darbi Berry, *ARCCA 2023 Chair*  
San Diego Regional Climate Collaborative (SDRCC)



Kaeleigh Reynolds, *ARCCA 2023 Vice Chair*  
Sierra Climate Adaptation and Mitigation  
Partnership (Sierra CAMP)

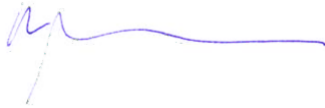




Erin Couotts  
Los Angeles Regional Collaborative for  
Climate Action & Sustainability (LARC)



Michael McCormick  
Bay Area Climate Adaptation Network (BayCAN)



Karen Gaffney  
North Coast Resource Partnership (NCRP)



Heather Allen  
Central Coast Climate Collaborative (4C)



Ari Simon  
Inland Southern California Climate Collaborative  
(ISC3)



Julia Kim, *ARCCA Director*  
CivicWell / Capital Region Climate Readiness  
Collaborative (CRCRC)