

Focus on: Washington's Climate Resilience Strategy



Figure 1. A Washington state farm is surrounded by flood waters during a flood event in the early 2010s.

Need for action

Climate change is increasing the severity of wildfires, heatwaves, droughts, and floods in Washington. Even slower impacts caused by climate change, like sea level rise, ocean acidification, and snowpack loss, are putting added stress on our communities, infrastructure, and natural environment.

Every region of our state will be affected to some degree by these changes, and the impacts will be felt in our economy, our environment, and the health of our communities.

To help Washington prepare for these impacts, the Washington Department of Ecology is working to update the state's Climate Resilience Strategy by Sept. 30, 2024, as [directed by the Legislature in Chapter 70A.05 RCW](#).

Anticipate, prepare, adapt

Climate resilience is the ongoing process of anticipating, preparing for, and adapting to changes in climate to minimize negative impacts to our natural systems, infrastructure, and communities.

The Climate Resilience Strategy will help us adopt strategic and integrated approaches to better manage the risks that climate change poses.

Uneven distribution

Climate change impacts won't affect every part of Washington equally. They often hit communities of color, low-income communities, and vulnerable populations first and worst. These same communities may not have the resources to take actions that reduce, prevent, or help them withstand climate impacts, and they may struggle to recover from climate-fueled events, like flooding or extreme heat.

Ecology's updated Climate Resilience Strategy will allow the state to incorporate climate justice at the core of the actions we take to address these inequities and direct resources where they are needed the most. This will help us deliver a more equitable and resilient future for all Washingtonians.

What will a statewide strategy do?

Our updated Climate Resilience Strategy will:

- [Prioritize environmental justice](#) and continue our focus on equity and reducing impacts of climate change on overburdened communities.
- Identify ways the state can aid climate-response activities by Tribes, local governments, and others.
- Bring together [current climate change response work](#) across multiple state agencies to improve the efficiency and coordination of state efforts, including federal funding opportunities.
- Identify solutions and actions that address the highest climate change risks and vulnerabilities, including identifying agency leads responsible for carrying out actions and tracking progress in implementing these steps.

How will we develop the strategy?

Ecology is working with an interagency team of nine other state agencies to assist in developing the strategy: Agriculture, Commerce, Fish and Wildlife, Health, Natural Resources, and Transportation, plus Washington Emergency Management Division, Washington State Conservation Commission, and Puget Sound Partnership.

We'll also seek input from other interested state agencies that would like to opt in or have relevant activities on worker safety or community response.

We'll request technical and scientific advice from the [University of Washington Climate Impacts Group](#). This group also will serve as a central resource for state agencies on climate impact data.

Ecology will engage a wide array of interested groups in the process ([see the draft Engagement Plan](#)), and we'll incorporate criteria for prioritizing actions and meeting other requirements for the strategy.

Strategy requirements

The Climate Resilience Strategy is guided by the following principles:

- Prioritizing actions that:
 - Reduce greenhouse gas emissions.
 - Deploy natural solutions, restore habitat, or reduce stressors that exacerbate impacts.
 - Address specific issues of concern like drought and urban heat.
 - Promote and protect human health.
- Protecting overburdened communities and vulnerable populations and providing more equitable outcomes.
- Considering flexible and adaptive approaches for preparing for uncertain climate impacts.
- Addressing risks in each geographic region of the state appropriately. The strategy must include a

summary of each agency's existing climate resilience work. It needs to identify key gaps to advancing climate resilience actions and help develop strategies and actions to address the greatest climate vulnerabilities and risks to Washington's communities and ecosystems.

We need to include the estimated cost for applying the strategy and a recommended structure to enable ongoing agency coordination and prioritization.

Timeline

Winter 2023-24 and Spring 2024: Identify gaps, needs, actions, and recommendations

Summer 2024: Refine state actions

Fall 2024: Finalize strategy; publish by Sept. 30, 2024

Throughout the process: Engagement with communities

Fall 2025: Progress report due (every two years)

2028: Update strategy (every four years)

Related information

- [Climate Resilience Strategy webpage](#)
- [Sign up for the email list](#)

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ADA accessibility

To request an ADA accommodation, contact Ecology by phone at 360-407-6831 or email at ecyadacoordinator@ecy.wa.gov, or visit <https://ecology.wa.gov/accessibility>. For Relay Service or TTY call 711 or 877-833-6341.