



www.mdclimatechange.us

Public Awareness, Outreach, Training, and Capacity Building

Option Description

Sea level rise and increases in the frequency and intensity of flooding, storms, and storm surges are expected to have complex and far-reaching consequences for residents, businesses and trades, and local governments. Better preparation, through modification of existing and implementation of new strategies and policies, will reduce the impacts experienced. A key component is increasing awareness of the risks and appropriate responses among those responsible for preparation and response, as well as those likely to be affected, including the media, non-governmental organizations, and others. It is important that all stakeholders be identified, along with their specific educational, outreach, training, and capacity building needs.¹

Communicating the potential risks of and responses to climate change is needed to implement the recommendations from all policy options identified by the MD ARWG. Two basic activities are needed: development of coordinated and cohesive communication messages, and effective distribution of the messages to a wide variety of people and professions across all levels of government, sectors, and organizations. For example, the needs of property owners within coastal counties will differ from plans to ensure that mental health needs are addressed during and after a disaster. Of particular concern are developing communication plans to reach low-income and under-served populations.

For the public health sector, education, training, and outreach programs are needed for actions to take during and following an event to reduce the potential for outbreaks of vector-, food- and waterborne diseases, including to contaminated recreational water. Efforts need to be increased to educate health care providers and the public on the signs and symptoms of these diseases, to improve detection and treatment.

¹ Outreach- is an effort by an organization to connect its ideas or practices to the efforts of other organizations, groups, specific audiences, or the general public.

Training- refers to the acquisition of knowledge, skills, and competencies as a result of the teaching of practical skills and knowledge. □

Technical Assistance- professional and direct assistance intended to provide guidance to organizations or individuals to conduct or strengthen specific management objectives.

Capacity Building – a comprehensive suite of tools to strengthen the ability, behavior and skills of individuals and improve institutional structures and processes such that the organization can effectively meet its mission and goals.

Vulnerable infrastructure needs to be protected from greater storm surges and greater or more frequent flooding events. The building and development community will need to be made aware of and understand how to implement new building codes adopted to reduce potential losses. Local governments will need to understand how to implement and enforce new polices. Shoreline changes as a result of sea level rise and coastal hazards could impact a broad group of constituents and those impacts need to be understood by a range of individuals from landscapers to mortgage brokers to property owners. Building the capacity of different constituents to prepare for and respond to sea level rise and its impacts will increase Maryland's effectiveness to incorporate new information into its mitigation and adaptation approaches.

Incorporation of climate change and sea level rise risks into formal training programs for individuals entering impacted businesses would assure a strong capacity to address these issues in the future. The policy would focus on integration of information on sea level rise and associated risks and risk management strategies into existing, ongoing training programs and support the creation of new programs where they do not currently exist.

Option Design

Targets:

- Framework for consistent communication established within one year of implementation of this option.
- Develop risk communication training with Public Information Officers of germane agencies to ensure clear and consistent messaging, as well as preventing contradictions in messages and warnings. The Network for Education of Municipal Officials (NEMO) could be used as the template.
- Develop educational programs on appropriate behavior before, during, and following extreme events. Identify and engage all licensing, training, and capacity-building programs that currently exist in areas at serious risk from sea level rise and extreme weather events. Work with industry professionals and other groups or people that live or work in these areas to identify gaps in public awareness, training, and capacity building.
- Recommend specific policy and program changes that need to occur to enable these groups and programs to respond to future training and capacity needs in a manner best suited to their respective involvement in activities related to risks from sea level rise and in the frequency and intensity of extreme weather events.
- Continue to provide training and public awareness opportunities and capacity building assistance, but begin to offer more targeted support to areas that will be most seriously affected.
- Increase the ability of residents, businesses and trades, and local governments at risk from the impacts of climate change to understand the potential risks, gather the information necessary to make informed decisions, and work with partners to identify solutions.
- Develop educational programs to increase awareness of the risks of vector- and waterborne diseases in a warmer climate.

- Contact landowners to make them aware of wetland and forest protection programs (e.g. land easement and/or purchase programs).
- Conduct outreach to marine contractors to train them in the design and implementation of innovative shore erosion control strategies.
- Conduct outreach to communities to inform them of the most current design and construction standards for erosion control structures and tidal shoreline habitat enhancement projects.
- Disseminate information generated from the assessment of potential climate change impacts to resources-based industries.
- Ensure access to outputs from the option RRI-1 “New Criteria for Identifying Natural Resources Priority Protection Areas.” This option would include using GIS tools to assess target areas for strategic action. Outputs would include maps that identify areas most vulnerable to sea level rise. Access to these maps could be made available on a public website to increase awareness of the risks of sea level rise.

Timing:

- Recommend that all counties have Citizens Emergency Response Teams within two years.
- Increase the number of training programs and capacity building efforts in areas most at risk over the next five years.
- In areas most at risk, convene a multidisciplinary group to identify risks and possible responses, including in public health, disaster management, building trades, and others. For building trades, there would be a review of building codes and other regulations to identify and adopt necessary changes over the next ten years, and incorporate these activities into licensing training procedures.

Parties Involved:

- MD DNR, MD MDE, MD DHMH, MD DLLR, MEMA, NEMO, the Governor’s Office of Community Initiatives, the Governor’s Office on Service and Volunteerism, local governments and Citizens Emergency Response Teams, property owners, business and trade members in industries affected by sea level rise and climate change, church-based groups, non-governmental organizations, etc.

Implementation Mechanisms

Implementation of this recommendation would require a coordinated effort through a number of existing agencies/departments, groups, organizations, and programs. One approach would be to assign a staff member on the Governor’s Sustainability Sub-Cabinet. The Maryland Municipal Leaders and the Maryland Association of County Officials also could play a significant role in implementation, possibly including sponsoring a yearly event focused on education.

Successful implementation would require an investment in staff time and funding to: complete a review of current training and capacity-building programs or delivery options; identify mechanisms through which new or revised programs would be most likely to succeed; and create or update policies and regulations.

Real estate disclosure brochure regarding the risks associated with climate change.

Related Policies/Programs in Place

Existing policies and programs already in place include:

- The Maryland Department of Labor, Licensing, and Regulation’s Division of Occupational and Professional Licensing Maryland Home Improvement Commission (MHIC) provides a variety of licensing services required by the State to industry professionals.
- The Maryland Coastal Program, and other coastal and shoreline groups within MD DNR, delivers technical and financial assistance, data tools, and training opportunities to groups such as property owners, local and state governments, marine contracting professionals, and other networked partners.
- The Chesapeake Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve’s Coastal Training Program leads training events for professional coastal decision makers on a variety of coastal- and climate-change related issues in cooperation with a network of partners.
- The Department of Health and Mental Hygiene does outreach to health professionals related to vector-borne diseases. In addition, the Office of Preparedness and Response works with local health departments and Maryland Emergency Management Agency on public preparedness efforts.
- Other organizations and programs also work with related industries and groups to provide training, public awareness programs and capacity building.

Estimation of Adaptation Benefits and Costs

- **Estimated Cost:**
- **Flexibility:**
- **Adaptive capacity:**
- **Other:**

Feasibility Issues

Status of Group Approval

Barriers to Consensus