Local Climate Action Summit

September 28, 2018
During Climate Week NYC
at The Cornell Club, 6 East 44th Street, NY, NY 10017

The Cornell Institute for Climate Smart Solutions hosted a Local Climate Action Summit in New York City during New York Climate Week. The event was attended by over 100 individuals from government agencies, NGOs, municipalities, Cooperative Extension and universities that spanned the entire Northeastern US.

The summit focused sharing success stories and challenges of local communities to address climate change, and to get stakeholder input on the development of a new Extension Climate Steward Volunteer program that would support climate-smart communities in the Northeast.

The summit was an opportunity for communities and leaders working in climate resiliency to not only provide input on community needs but also share their experiences in fostering climate action and implementation at the local level.

Support for the summit was provided by the Cornell Institute for Climate Smart Solutions, the David R. Atkinson Center for a Sustainable future at Cornell University, and the USDA National Institute for Food and Agriculture.
# Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agenda</td>
<td>p. 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morning Keynote</td>
<td>p. 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Panel 1</td>
<td>p. 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Panel 2</td>
<td>p. 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lunch Keynote</td>
<td>p. 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Climate Stewards Project Overview and breakout session</td>
<td>p. 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Panel 3</td>
<td>p. 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Next Steps and Funders</em></td>
<td>p.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Appendix 1: Organizations represented by attendees</em></td>
<td>p. 13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Agenda: Local Climate Action Summit

8:00am  Registration, networking and continental breakfast

8:40am  Welcome and Overview: Allison Chatrchyan, Cornell Institute for Climate Smart Solutions

8:50am  Keynote talk: Connecting Local, Regional and Global work on Climate Change: Adam Parris, Executive Director, Science and Resilience Institute at Jamaica Bay.

9:20am  Panel Discussion 1: Planning and Action at the Local Level Moderated by: Dazzle Ekblad, NYS Climate Smart Communities Program
Julie Noble, Kingston, NY
Katie Walsh, CDP Cities North America
Ann Goodman, CUNY, ASRC Environmental Initiative
Brooks Winner, Climate Table, ME

10:40am  Networking break and exhibit tables

11:00am  Panel 2 Discussion: How communities are responding to Climate Change Impacts
Moderated by: Erin Lane, USDA NE Climate Hub
Bruce Packer, Mayor of Glen Rock, NJ
David Kooris, Resilient Bridgeport, CT
Tara Paxton, Brick Township, NJ
Juli Schroeger, Rockaway Waterfront Alliance, NY

12:20pm  Lunch and Keynote Address: Is your Community Prepared for Climate Change? Resources from ICLEI USA: Mike Steinhoff, ICLEI USA

1:20pm  Introduction and overview of the New Extension Volunteer Climate Stewards Program: Danielle Eiseman and Allison Chatrchyan, Cornell Institute for Climate Smart Solutions

1:35pm  Stakeholder Input to the New Extension Volunteer Climate Stewards Program Katherine Bunting-Howarth, Moderator of Breakout Session - facilitators at each table to lead Discussion:
How can we increase climate action (planning, mitigation, adaptation) at a local level?
What are the barriers to local climate action? What help do communities need to develop a Climate Action Plan or take action?
How could trained Extension Climate Steward Volunteers help their community with local climate change planning and projects?

2:15pm Table report out and discussion

2:45pm Networking Break & Visit Tables with Climate Action Resources

3:00pm Panel Discussion 3: Overcoming Barriers to Local Climate Action and Lessons Learned
Moderated by: Shorna Allred, Cornell University
Jackie Guild, City of Annapolis, MD
Steve Walz, Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments
Terrance Carroll, Tompkins County CCE
Andrew Reinmann, CUNY Environmental Sciences Initiative
Marjorie Kaplan, Rutgers Climate Institute

4:25pm The Importance of Local Climate Action for Resiliency: Randi Johnson, USDA NIFA

4:50pm Wrap up and adjourn
Welcome
Dr. Allison Chatrchyan, Director of the Cornell Institute for Climate Smart Solutions, welcomed the attendees and provided a brief overview of the activities for the day. The day-long summit was comprised of three panel discussions, with the first focused on planning and action at the local level; the second on how communities are responding to climate change; and the third on overcoming barriers to climate action at the local level. Keynote talks were given at pivotal points throughout the day. Adam Parris, the Executive Director of the Science Resilience Institute Jamaica Bay, providing the first keynote talk of the day. Michael Steinhoff, Program Director for Tools and Technical Innovation at the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI), provided the lunch keynote talk and Dr. Randi Johnson from the USDA NIFA program, provided the final keynote of the day. The event also consisted of a break-out session to discuss critical needs of communities in the Northeast to inform the feasibility of a new Extension Climate Stewards Volunteer program.

Below are key points and themes from the day, as well as future steps to maintain momentum and enthusiasm for local climate action, the Climate Stewards Program and collaboration among attendees. There was an emphasis on determining how to support each other moving forward, a key outcome we hope to facilitate in the future.

Morning Keynote: Connecting Local, Regional and Global Work on Climate Change
Adam Parris, Executive Director of the Science and Resilience Institute at Jamaica Bay set the tone for the day with his keynote talk. He emphasized the need for communities, practitioners and researchers to support each other as well as learn from each other. Parris further commented on the difficulty in defining “local” when climate change and greenhouse gases know no boundaries. He challenged the audience to consider at what scale local climate action would be most effective and how communities could work together to increase climate action. Furthermore, he emphasized the importance of maintaining local culture and dignity while improving local climate action efforts through participatory planning.

Panel 1: Climate planning and action at the local level
The first panel of the day was moderated by Dazzle Ekblad, a Climate Policy Analyst with the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation and NYS Office of Climate Change. The panel consisted of representatives from both local governments and organizations working closely with local governments. The focus of the discussion was on the process of moving from planning to implementation, a critical barrier to local climate action.

Julie Noble, the Environmental Education and Sustainability Coordinator for the City of Kingston, New York explained how the City of Kingston was able to become a New York State
certified Climate Smart Community. In their case, community engagement was a critical aspect to moving from the planning stage to climate action. Through their efforts the city has reached Bronze Level accreditation for the New York Climate Smart Communities Program. The city further cemented itself as a model city for initiatives in energy efficiency, environmental quality and economic stability.

Katie Walsh of the Carbon Disclosure Project (CDP), Cities North America program commented on the power of cities and investment in public planning and policy decisions, citing the global environmental disclosure platform as an example of local climate action. One of the most striking pieces of evidence she provided on how communities are responding to climate change, beyond financial aspects, was that, “Cities that have disclosed to CDP for 3 years or more, report significantly higher levels of emissions measurement and management data, risk recognition and adaptation actions and opportunities.” This suggests the CDP is critical in moving cities from the planning stage to action and implementation, something that many cities struggle to achieve. Ms. Walsh further established the value of partnerships, a theme heard repeatedly throughout the day.

Dr. Ann Goodman from the City University of New York (CUNY), Advanced Science Research Center (ARSC) Environmental Initiative focused her presentation on how businesses can interact with communities to foster climate resilience. She further built off of Adam Parris’ keynote point on how we define local. Dr. Goodman extended this to encourage us to consider how we define a community. When it comes to climate action planning, businesses are a valuable, yet often forgotten partner in responding to climate change. Considering the business perspective in future planning and action can facilitate community resiliency.

Brooks Winner, who is co-chair of the Maine Climate Table Energy Efficiency Subcommittee and the Community Development Officer for the Island Institute, told the successful story of how the Maine Climate Table was formed to fill a leadership vacuum at the state level to support cross-sector collaboration on local climate action issues. That work has yielded some exciting results across Maine, including recommendations on messaging on climate change to encourage public engagement. An important approach was utilizing people’s experiences with a changing climate, that are delivered in a relatable way, from peers, as opposed to from scientists or politicians.

**Panel 2: How Communities are Responding to Climate Change**
The second panel discussion focused on how communities are responding to climate change. This panel was moderated by Erin Lane of the USDA Northeast Climate Hub and provided perspectives from communities in New Jersey, Connecticut, and the Rockaways. The panelists
provided a variety of examples of what their communities are doing to not only adapt to climate change but also how to get their communities more involved in local action.

Mayor Bruce Packer from Glen Rock, New Jersey spoke on the effectiveness of collaboration between elected officials and local environmental groups, stating that “everyone has a role in making a difference.” His leadership and his passion for helping the community reach its goals in being prepared for the future impacts of climate change was inspiring for everyone in the room. Mayor Packer further emphasized the strong support he has from his staff and community at large. Lastly, he discussed the value of keeping youth educated and engaged, a critically important theme that arose throughout the day.

David Kooris, Deputy Commissioner for the Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development, spoke of the intersection between climate action and land use initiatives for transportation and infrastructure and argued that initiatives should be scaled to the state level to effect the most change. The Resilient Bridgeport pilot program has been a valuable initiative. One of the most critical actions the city has taken is moving buildings further inland. This action minimizes infrastructure challenges the city faces in response to sea level rise. Moving buildings and structures inland reduces the height that building foundation walls need to be reinforced to prevent flood damage.

Tara Paxton, the Assistant Planner from Brick Township, New Jersey, provided evidence of how cities are responding to climate impacts from the planning perspective. She stressed the necessity of being prepared for extreme weather events by investing in long-term resiliency efforts, especially as flooding becomes an increasing concern among communities in the Northeast. In the wake of Hurricane Sandy, Brick Township has been able to leverage the significant amount of damage from the event to develop flood management plans and studies. The township has developed a multi-level flood management plan, including a repetitive loss area analysis, a flood warning and response plan, a hazard mitigation plan and neighborhood plans that have more specific responses to unique neighborhoods within the township.

Juli Schroeger, Program Coordinator for the Rockaway Waterfront Alliance and Isabel Colon, a local high school student, emphasized three major pathways to address community resiliency: education, stewardship, and building community and social ties. A key component to fulfilling those pathways is through their youth engagement program. Students connected with the Rockaway Waterfront Alliance actively engage in community resiliency projects such as coastal protection projects. Isabel Colon, a high school student who has been active in the Rockaway Waterfront Alliance community programs blew the audience away. She has been actively involved in community resilience projects and has been taking political action, encouraging
local politicians and Congressman to address climate change. Isabel’s passion and eloquence was an inspiration to everyone and a beacon of hope for those of us working in local climate action.

**Lunch Keynote: The Impact of Local Climate Action**

Michael Steinhoff, the Program Director for Tools and Technical Innovation with ICLEI USA, discussed the importance of local climate action and the impacts it has, not just on the communities involved, but for society at large. Mike was able to show how small, incremental changes among many communities does add up to significant change. Although communities emphasize monitoring and reducing greenhouse gas emissions, informal and distributed actions are just as important as large governmental action for building resiliency. Although community resilience is difficult to assess and quantify, resiliency actions are vital for ensuring we continue to thrive. ICLEI, along with its key partners across research, policy and practice, are consistently working to ensure mitigation and adaptation efforts are more approachable.

**Breakout session: Introduction to the Climate Stewards Program**

After lunch, Danielle Eiseman and Allison Chatrchyan, of the Cornell Institute for Climate Smart Solutions, presented a brief overview of Cornell’s USDA-funded Climate Stewards planning project. The project is a one-year planning grant to assess the feasibility of developing a new Climate Stewards Program for the Northeast, based on the successful model of Extension Master Volunteer programs. The main objectives of the study were to conduct a comprehensive literature review, develop an inventory of community-based climate education programs and conduct a feasibility study using participatory methods, such as focus groups. Over the course of the year, project partners at the University of Maryland, University of the District of Columbia, University of Delaware, University of Maine, University of Vermont, Rutgers University, New York Sea Grant, the USDA Northeast Climate Hub, Penn State, Delaware State University and Tompkins County Cooperative Extension conducted 18 focus groups in each state with community volunteers. The preliminary results indicate the best way volunteers could help their communities is by engaging youth on climate action, educating other community members, and facilitating action planning and implementation at the municipal level.

In addition to reporting on the initial study results, the project partners sought to gather valuable input from project stakeholders at the summit. Katherine Bunting-Howarth of NY Sea Grant moderated the Breakout session. She challenged attendees at each table to answer the following questions during the breakout session:
How can we increase climate action (planning, mitigation, and adaptation) at a local level?
What are the barriers to local climate action? What help do communities need to develop a Climate Action Plan or take action?
How could trained Extension Climate Steward Volunteers help their community with local climate change planning and projects?

Kathy Bunting-Howarth facilitated the report back from each table of responses to these questions from the breakout group discussion, which are summarized below.

**How can we increase climate action (planning, mitigation, and adaptation) at a local level?**
- From a planning perspective, collectively we need to move on from the planning stage and start implementing projects.
- Communities need demonstrable projects with suggestions on how they could be adapted or scaled for different communities.
- Climate action, mitigation and adaptation need to be presented in ways that are easy for individuals and decision-makers to understand.
- We need to be able to find effective ways to work with outreach and Extension to normalize discussions on climate change.
- Youth need to be part of the discussion on climate action and should be not only educated on climate change, but empowered to voice their opinions for the future they want.
- Funding and knowledge of funding mechanisms are critical to increasing action at the local level.
- Communities need a space to come together to discuss these issues, with a focus on environmental justice and equality.

**What are the barriers to local climate action? What help do communities need to develop a Climate Action Plan or take action?**
- Getting the community involved in development, while considering issues with equity, is difficult when community members have busy, fragmented lives. This makes it difficult for individuals to consider the larger issues.
- Institutional support is critical for ensuring climate action is achieved but is largely reliant on capacity, skillsets, funding, time and longevity of nonprofits and/or volunteer retention.
- Overcoming psychological barriers to action, which could potentially overcome through education, and understanding of basic science and communication.
There is a need to build better connections between local and regional government, research and community members.

How could trained Extension Climate Steward Volunteers help their community with local climate change planning and projects?

- Prioritize off-the-shelf, piloted projects that deliver measurable results, that could easily be adapted and implemented in a variety of communities that are looking to take initial steps in climate action planning.
- Framing the conversation on local action would be valuable as well, volunteers could inform decision-makers and other community members with data-driven information and cross-sectional ideas, without a specific political ideology.
- Volunteers could help facilitate connections between communities and levels of government, motivate and educate youth, and fill gaps within the local government in climate action planning.
- Technical skills of volunteers would be valuable such as mapping, building relationships, sharing best practices and support grant writing.

Panel 3: Lessons learned and overcoming barriers to climate action

The third panel of the day was moderated by Dr. Shorna Allred of Cornell University and provided perspectives from municipalities, Extension and research on how we can collectively overcome the barriers to local climate action planning. The panel focused on interesting perspectives from both small cities, regional initiatives and work with more rural constituencies, and how universities and Extension offices can be a valuable resource for implementing local climate action projects.

Jackie Guild, the Director of the Office of Environmental Policy, Annapolis, Maryland, spoke about the lessons learned in getting the community involved, particularly in the protection of historical landmarks along the shoreline in Annapolis. The city’s hazard mitigation plan gave considerable attention to the local culture and social value of protecting the shore. This approach has proven to be effective for Annapolis and local businesses have begun implementing recommended actions to protect the community against sea level rise. Partnerships and stakeholder engagement were integral to achieving the desired outcomes.

Steve Walz, the Director of the Department of Environmental Programs, Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments, described how regional governments can effectively work together to address environmental risks such as energy and climate, water quality, air quality and waste management. Over time, the regional council of governments has been able to
leverage co-benefits of implementing climate mitigation actions to achieve emission and energy
targets. The Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments has used the regional approach
to further build policies and practices in smart land use and transportation. The result is
significant transition to renewable energy sources, reduced greenhouse gas emissions, an
increase in electric vehicle ownership and increased access to high-capacity transit centers to
courage use of public transit.

Terrance Carroll of Cornell Cooperative Extension of Tompkins County, described how research
and local governments can ‘meet in the middle’ to achieve their goals in local climate action. He
described how Cooperative Extension can facilitate that interaction, and support local
municipalities with energy efficiency and climate change planning projects. Terry stated that
although time and funding are barriers to the work Cooperative Extension is able to do, they
have learned that relationships and partnerships are critical to climate action planning and
implementation. Cooperative Extension has cache, especially in rural areas and their work
builds over time. Their experience with diverse communities and knowledge of untapped
resources affords them the ability to frame messages accordingly, to support municipalities and
build connections.

Andrew Reinmann, of the CUNY Environmental Science Initiative, provided examples of how his
work on the cooling effects of trees, when framed in different ways, such as energy savings, can
make climate action planning more approachable for municipalities. He added a bit of
light-heartedness to the afternoon by describing trees as ‘charismatic megaflora’ a term that
stuck with the group for the remainder of the afternoon. However, what was most striking from
his talk was the amount of energy savings lost from a massive loss of trees due to pests in
Worcester, Massachusetts. His final point was the value trees have in climate action planning,
not just in terms of carbon sequestration, but in reducing urban heat island effects and energy
usage.

Dr. Marjorie Kaplan, of the Rutgers Climate Institute, closed out the panel by describing the
work done by the Rutgers Climate Institute to increase resilience throughout New Jersey.
Through the NJ Climate Adaptation Alliance, the institute has developed decision support tools
for communities, sector specific guides and communications materials with consideration for
social and equitable hurdles to climate action. They have relied on stakeholder engagement to
identify policy gaps and provide recommendations on how to make an evidence-based case for
taking climate action in New Jersey.
**Final Keynote: Dr. Randi Johnson, USDA-NIFA**

The summit concluded with remarks from Dr. Randi Johnson from USDA-NIFA on the importance of local climate action for resiliency. As she summarized the key points from the day, what came across most abundantly was the importance of partnerships. Randi commented that every presentation given throughout the day had at least one slide that was filled with the logos of multiple organizations. It was clear that none of the work we collectively do would be achievable without the partnerships and relationships we have built. She encouraged us to keep this Climate Stewards effort moving forward, to connect further and build off the momentum and enthusiasm from the summit to achieve not just local but state, regional and global climate action. This important message cemented the value of the summit, of meeting potential collaborators in person and pursuing relationships among a network of practitioners, researchers and Extension specialists.

**Next Steps:**

Researchers from the Cornell Institute for Climate Smart Solutions plan to carry this initiative forward and incorporate the lessons learned from the day into the Climate Stewards program plan. CICSS will also work to keep summit attendees connected through future meetings and possibly a second summit next year. In addition to these proceedings, CICCSS will be publishing the results from our planning grant on the feasibility of the Climate Stewards program, through a white paper prepared for the USDA NIFA. The [PowerPoint slides](#) from the summit are available for workshop participants from the Cornell Institute for Climate Smart Solutions.

**Funding Acknowledgment:**

This summit was supported in part through a grant the Agriculture and Food Research Initiative Program from the USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture (grant no. 2017-68002-26729). The project’s main goal is to perform a detailed needs assessment for a new Climate Steward Volunteer program that would support climate-smart communities, focusing on the Northeastern US. The long-term goal is to 1) design and implement a Climate Steward Volunteer program that would train a cadre of citizens who can support local community initiatives on climate change adaptation and mitigation; and 2) develop materials and training to incorporate climate change into existing Master Volunteer programs and thereby extend the reach of trained volunteers working on climate change.

The [David R. Atkinson Center for a Sustainable Future](#) at Cornell University provided a Rapid Response grant to partially support the Summit. Without the support of these institutions we would not have been able to hold the Local Climate Action Summit, nor provide funding for municipal and non-profit stakeholders to travel to the summit.
Organizations Represented at the Summit

350.org NYC
Alexandria Real Estate Equities
Borough of Glen Rock
California Institute of Technology
Carnegie Museum of Natural History
Cornell Cooperative Extension Ulster County
Cornell Institute for Climate Smart Solutions
City of Annapolis, MD
City of Kingston==, NY
City University of New York
Columbia University
Cornell Cooperative Extension Schuyler County
Cornell Cooperative Extension Tompkins County
Cornell Department of Natural Resources
Cornell Tech
Cornell Cooperative Extension of New York City
Curro Bankenveld
CWS (Church World Service)
Delaware State University
Rye Sustainability Committee
School of Visual Art
Sitra The Finnish Innovation Fund
Sustainable Development Solutions Network
The Nature Conservancy
The Wild Center
Town of Southampton, State Abr
Township of Brick, State Abr
UD Cooperative Extension

Green Map System
ICLEI
iDig2Learn, a project of Open Space Institute, Inc.
Island Institute/Maine Climate Table
Jobs to Move America - NY
Joule Community Power
Lewis and Gould
Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments
Molloy College/CERCOM
Northeast Clean Energy Council
New York Sea Grant
New York Sea Grant - Science and Resilience Institute at Jamaica Bay
NYC Parks - Forestry Horticulture and Natural Resources
NYS Dept. of Env. Conservation, NYS Office of Climate Change
NYSERDA
Orange County, NY Planning Department
Paleontological Research Institution
Rockaway Waterfront Alliance
Rutgers Climate Institute
Ulster County Department of the Environment
University of the District of Columbia
University of Vermont
USDA National Institute for Food and Agriculture
USDA Northeast Climate Hub
WaterAid
Women of Color Speak Out
WSP Global
Youth Green Foundation