

CONVENING REGIONAL CLIMATE COLLABORATIVES: A CROSS-COMPARISON OF US CASES

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Abstract: Collaboration has been increasingly used to address complex regional problems that cross political boundaries and jurisdictions. The roles, approaches and implementation issues associated with collaboration strategies and networks have been widely discussed in the research literature, but there has been less analysis of the approaches and deliberations associated with convening collaborative efforts. This paper explores the issues, dialogue and framing of collaborative efforts through a cross case comparison of climate change mitigation and adaptation actions plans across the United States. In this first phase, we present the findings from our content analysis of documents, agreements and web sites. When analyzed by strategy (mitigation versus greenhouse gas reduction) and approach (alignment versus joint action), we found two distinct groupings: (1) efforts largely focused on mitigating effects through alignment; and (2) efforts drawing on joint action and alignment to consider mitigation and greenhouse gas reduction. Our next phase of the project will use interviews to analyze the political, institutional, and other factors affecting this framing.

Keywords: climate change collaboration; regional governance; consensus building

Introduction

Across the United States, groups of administrators and elected officials are launching collaborative efforts to address climate change. The collaborative efforts involve a wide range of government, nongovernment and private stakeholders responding to calls for convening efforts to create change. These efforts have emerged from the growing concerns about greenhouse gas emissions, impacts from climate change, and the increasing number of severe storm events. They have also emerged from a lack of international and national leadership in addressing climate issues.

The roles, approaches and implementation issues associated with collaboration strategies and networks have been widely discussed in the research literature (Forester, 2013; Healey, 1997; Innes & Booher, 2009; Koppenjan, 2008; Margerum, 2011). There has been less analysis of the approaches and deliberations associated with convening collaboration. Some researchers have identified common processes and issues associated with convening (Carlson, 1999; Margerum, 2011), but have not explored in detail the process of gathering diverse stakeholders prior to the formal launch of a collaboration effort. This paper seeks to understand more about the people and processes that led to the convening of climate change collaboratives. In particular, we are interested not just in its emergence in the places where we would expect it to appear, but also in places where the politics and attitudes towards climate policy are less conducive to action.

In the following sections, we summarize the existing literature on convening collaboratives, discuss the methods we are using to investigate this topic, and summarize the findings to date on this project



Research on Convening

Although there has been considerable research on collaboration, there has been relatively little research on the factors that lead to convening collaboratives. Our review of the literature highlights several themes.

Problem Context

Margerum (2011) notes that the Institutional Rational Choice literature identifies several factors hypothesized to affect collaborative formation. First, there are the attributes of the issue such as whether the problems are severe and whether knowledge about the problem is very good. Second, there are attributes of the institution, such as the initial transaction costs, whether existing institutions are effectively addressing the problem, and whether higher level institutions grant local autonomy. Finally, there are attributes of the community, such as the extent of the social capital, diversity of beliefs and potential costs and benefits related to the issue (Ostrom 2005; Leach and Sabatier 2005).

While these factors are clearly important, collaborative governance is only one tool that leaders could use to address these issues. Scott and Thomas (2017) highlight several reasons why leaders in a given situation may pursue collaborative governance, as compared to different strategies or no action. First, collaboration may improve the quality of decision making through additional research, information and expertise. Second, collaboration may create a broad consensus that allows more actors to become evolved—thereby increasing validity of efforts. Third, collaboration allows decision makers to span boundaries with other mechanisms are absent. Fourth, it allows participants to bridge hierarchies between for example, local and state government. Fifth, collaboration allows economies of scale when developing policies and strategies with other jurisdictions. Finally, it allows the diversification of issues, such as combining land use, hazards, and community health through cross-cutting themes.

Convening Roles

A second body of literature summarized by Margerum (2011) relates the convening of collaboratives to specific roles of leaders or conveners. Carlson (1999) identifies the roles of sponsors and conveners. Sponsors are individuals or organizations that support the initiation of a group. Conveners help with the process of identifying stakeholders, bringing stakeholders to the table, and often finding resources to support the process (Carlson 1999). Researchers examining the role of inter-agency and boundary spanning efforts cite the communication networks and external relationships of these individuals as being important to build bridges across organizations (Chrislip and Larson 1994; Morse 2010; Crosby and Bryson 2005). In some cases, sponsoring organizations may hire or solicit a third party or neutral party to help convene a collaborative to avoid perceptions of bias (Gray 1989). The Institute for Sustainable Environment (Adams, Crowley, Forinash, & McKay, 2016) reviewed its role in convening resilient regions and identified several key issues. First, they found that a neutral facilitator was an important asset to allowing each party to represent their views. Second, local goals and context were important for determining membership. Third, as goals evolve it is also important to reassess and iterate to determine the most effective strategy and participants.

Convener characteristics

Carlson (1999) outlines some of the common steps in the convening process. First, there is the step of initial assessment where a convener needs to identify the issues, determine what the collaborative wants to accomplish, identify potential stakeholders, identify the convening steps and potential obstacles, and identify potential resource needs. Second, there is the step of identifying and engaging participants. Third, the necessary resources to convene the effort needs to be secured, including resources for training, hiring

support and reaching out to constituencies and the public. Finally, there is the planning and organization of the consensus building process.

Margerum (2011) also summarizes the characteristics of the convener from the literature. One of the most common characteristics is for conveners to appear as unbiased or trusted. Gray (1989) notes that if conveners are suspected of bias “other stakeholders may refuse to participate.” Another characteristic that can be important for convening some groups is the power of the convener, such as the power of holding formal office or the power of the courts to require parties come together. Researchers also cite more nuanced skills, such as a sense of timing, and the ability to identify stakeholders (Carlson 1999; Gray 1989). Gray suggests that they also need to have appreciative skills, which means that “they need to appreciate the potential value of collaborating”(Gray 1989).

Methods

To research this topic we identified over 20 climate change collaboratives across the United States from prior studies and web sites. We selected cases that (1) were initiated and the local or regional scale; (2) involved a cross-section of government and non-government stakeholders; (3) were using terms such as climate collaboratives; and (4) are mature enough to analyze plans, strategies and agreements.

After selecting the cases, we conducted an analysis of the web sites, plans and reports. This analysis examined the:

- Descriptions of the purpose of the collaborative
- Information about the rationale or motivation for creating a climate collaborative
- Major objectives or types of actions

In the second part of this project, the research team will be interviewing individuals from the cases involved in convening the collaborative. In particular, we are focusing on the nature of interaction and “behind the scenes discussions” prior to the public launch of the effort.

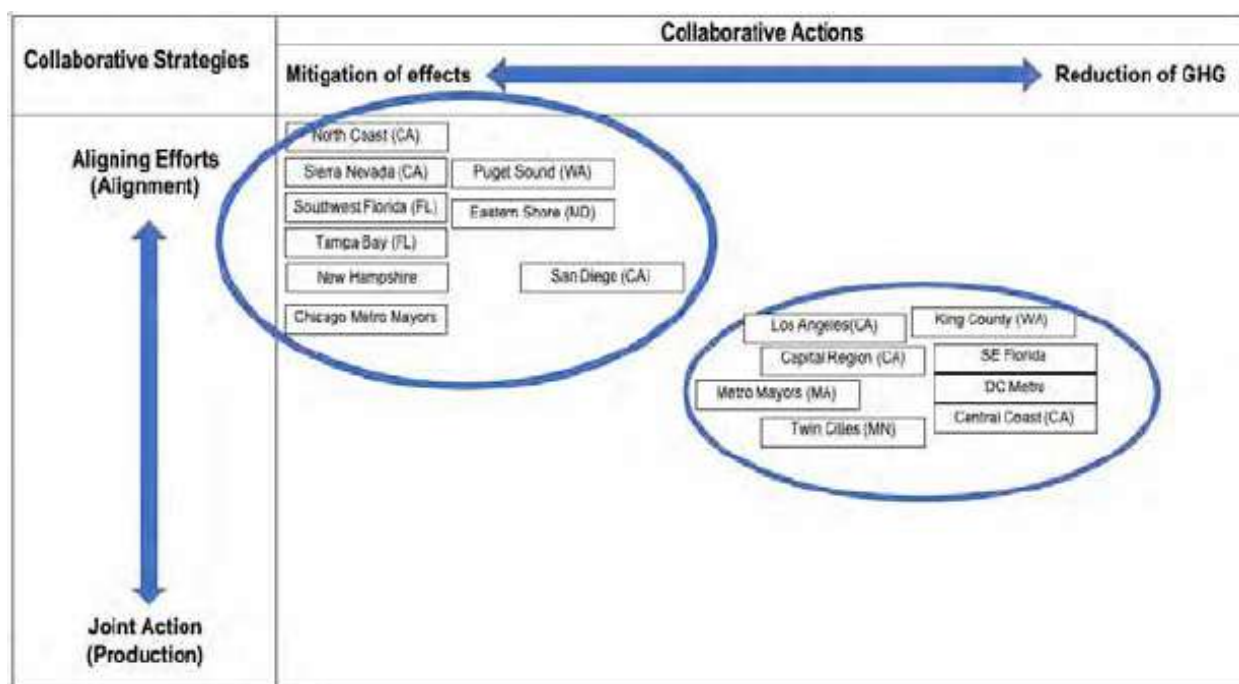
Table 1: Case Studies

State	Collaborative
Washington	Puget Sound Climate Preparedness Collaborative
Washington	King County-Cities Climate Collaboration
California	North Coast Resource Partnership
California	Capital Region Climate Readiness Collaborative
California	Central Coast Climate Collaborative
California	San Diego Regional Climate Collaborative
California	Sierra Nevada Climate Adaptation and Mitigation Partnership
Minnesota	Twin Cities Metropolitan Council: Climate Change and Emissions Team
Illinois	Metropolitan Mayors Caucus: Greenest Region Compact
New Hampshire	New Hampshire Coastal Adaptation Workgroup
Massachusetts	Metro Mayors Coalition Climate Preparedness Taskforce
Maryland	Eastern Shore Climate Adaptation Partnership
District of Columbia	Metro Washington Council of Governments: Climate Energy & Environment Policy Committee
Florida	NE Florida Regional Council: Public/Private Reg. Resiliency Committee
Florida	Southeast Florida Regional Climate Change Compact
California	Los Angeles Regional Collaborative
Florida	Tampa Bay Regional Resiliency Coalition
Florida	Southwest Florida [Southwest Florida Community Foundation?]
Florida	Metro Orlando [East Central Florida Regional Planning Council]
Missouri	Metro Kansas City

Findings

Our research will examine both the content of documents and interviews with those involved in the processes to understand the “behind the scenes” discussions and debates. This paper summarizes the findings related to the content analysis. The interviews with participants is currently in progress (see Figure 1)

Figure 1: Preliminary Analysis of Climate Collaborative Cases



Content Analysis Findings: Collaborative Actions

Our review of the content contained in plans, documents and web sites revealed a range of strategies and approaches to address climate impacts. There were two factors that commonly distinguished the strategies from each other: (1) the type of actions being addressed; and (2) the focus of these strategies and efforts.

The type of action spectrum ranged from those focused on mitigating effects to those focused on reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Typical mitigation actions are those that document and quantify risks from flooding and sea level rise on local jurisdictions. For example the Maryland Eastern Shore Climate Adaptation Partnership cited a primary goal as to “be prepared for immediate long-term coastal hazards and able to survive, adapt, and prosper in the face of uncertainty and vulnerability.” Similarly, the North Coast Resource Partnership (California) emphasizes “solutions to failing infrastructure, degraded ecosystems, emissions reduction, and community health and safety”; its document contain few references to climate change or greenhouse gas reductions. A typical greenhouse gas reduction strategy appears in the Massachusetts Metro Mayors Coalition for Climate Preparedness, which advocates for each jurisdiction to pledge to meet measurable and complementary GHG reduction targets.

Most documents we reviewed contained some elements related to the mitigation of effects. In particular, these collaboratives recognized the need to improve data regarding the accuracy of severe events and long term trends, and share strategies for adapting to this change. The motivations for this relate to the goal of improving the quality of outputs and span geographic boundaries (Scott and Thomas 2017). These are

strategic responses with relatively less political risk because they are contributing to efforts that will reduce future risk. From the interviews, we expect that this kind of outcome will resonate across a broader spectrum and therefore be an easier objective to promote in a collaborative process.

Less common among the plans were strategies focused on reducing greenhouse gasses. Regions such as D.C., Boston (Massachusetts), and the Twin Cities (Minnesota) all proposed specific steps to reduce greenhouse gases, which relate more to increasing the legitimacy of a regional approach and diversifying approaches for a more comprehensive approach (Scott and Thomas 2017). These kinds of actions require more significant policy strategies, such as regulation, surcharges, taxes or other measures to achieve outcomes. We expect the discussions relating to these kind of objectives to highlight more political differences and policy debates.

Content Analysis Findings: Collaborative Strategies

A second dimension used to analyze the plans was to examine the extent to which collaborative strategies focused on aligning efforts versus joint action. Aligning efforts refers to tasks of data sharing, mapping, best practices or other information to support individual decision making. Joint action refers to organizations agreeing to work together on policies, programs or decision making. This is a far more challenging level of activity, because it requires organizations to give up and share decision making authority.

An example of aligning efforts comes from Sierra Nevada Climate Adaptation and Mitigation Partnership (California), which focuses on capacity building, education, and convening. Similarly, the Metropolitan Mayor's Caucus (Illinois) focuses on sharing data, strategies and expertise. In contrast, the Central Coast Climate Collaborative (California) emphasizes the engagement of community leaders to "identifying opportunities for regional action" and providing a voice ". The Southeast Florida Regional Climate Change Compact promotes the creation of a regional climate action plan, hosting leadership summits to identify emerging issues, and working together to advocate for state and federal funding.

Implications

The next stage of this research project is to conduct interviews with the principle parties involved in the convening of these collaboration efforts. These interviews will focus on:

- Issues involved in framing collaboration efforts
- Types of tensions involved in convening collaborative efforts
- Common principles that allowed different parties to come together
- Strategies used to bring different parties together
- Actions and efforts that have helped maintain stakeholder involvement

Preliminary Issues to Explore

Based on the content analysis and previous research, we present several preliminary ideas about the relationship between problem context, policy and institutional context, and the collaborative approach. Because we are focusing only on regions where collaborative efforts have emerged, we interested in two main issues: (1) what motivated participants to address climate issues; and (2) what motivated participants to take a collaborative approach.

Motivation to Address Climate Issues

Our preliminary analysis of the cases and other research highlight several factors that appear to motivate a range of leaders and organizations to address climate issues

- **Recent major events:** Several regions have experienced major storms and events that have raised awareness of changing climate conditions. This has created public and political support for taking action—even in places where there may not be strong political consensus about human induced climate change.
- **Science and data needs:** In many regions, changing climate, increasing storms, and concerns about issues such as sea level rise have created questions about outdated information and policies. Local jurisdictions are motivated to work collaboratively to generate more accurate data and analysis; they also recognize the benefits of more consistency in this technical information.
- **State policy:** In states such as California, there is a proliferation of work around climate collaboratives, many of which are motivated by state policy requiring actions to reduce greenhouse gases.
- **Funding:** Many regions recognize that their efforts will require significant resources to address issues such as infrastructure vulnerability or reduction in vehicle miles. Therefore, leaders see the value of organizing local jurisdictions to acquire more funding from state and federal sources.

Motivation to Pursue a Collaborative Approach

Many individual organizations in the US have undertaken climate or resilience plans, but it has been less common for regions to take a collaborative approach. Based on our preliminary analysis and research, we believe there are several factors likely to explain the emergence of a regional collaborative.

- **Convening resources:** foundations and other funders have played a key role in providing the resources, facilitation expertise and funding to convene collaborative efforts. Particularly important has been the role of third party facilitating organizations that provide a neutral convener and facilitator, and add capacity and experience to organizing these efforts.
- **Peer motivation:** Elected officials and administrators interact on a national stage with other jurisdictions and regions. There is a sharing of ideas and competition for innovation that may play an important role in replicating regional collaboration efforts.
- **Interorganizational problem solving:** Many of the issues involved in addressing climate adaptation and greenhouse gas reduction require solutions that cross jurisdictional boundaries. This motivates jurisdictions to reach out to build a regional consensus among more diverse partners.
- **Lack of Political Consensus:** In many regions across the United States, there does not appear to be public or political consensus on climate-related issues. Even where this consensus does not exist, leaders recognize the value of convening a cross section of political perspectives to address impacts or make regions more resilient to events and changing weather patterns.

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Appendix

Table 1: Case Study Document Analysis

Case	Rationale	Objectives
Puget Sound Climate Preparedness Collaborative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Climate change risks • Prepare for impacts • Prepare and build resilience through adaptation strategies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build a shared understanding...and facilitate access to climate preparedness tools, research, recommendations, and best practices. • Empower regional practitioners through peer-to-peer climate preparedness programming • Engage and collaborate with local communities [to understand effects on residents and impacts related to disparity] • Communicate and improve the accessibility of information. • Identify opportunities for joint research • Ensure efforts address equity and existing inequities.
King County-Cities Climate Collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Action needed • Responses can be disjointed • Locals must overcome financial, technical, capacity and institutional obstacles 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outreach: Develop, refine, and utilize messaging and tools for climate change. • Coordination: Collaborate on adopting consistent standards, benchmarks, strategies,. • Solutions: Share local success stories, challenges, data and products. • Funding and resources: Collaborate to secure grant funding and other shared resource opportunities to support climate related projects and programs.
North Coast Resource Partnership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focused on achieving outcomes on the ground for North Coast communities and watersheds. • Embraces a set of integrated goals related to water quality and supply, ecosystem function, economic vitality, collaboration, climate adaptation and energy independence, and the health and safety. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Watershed restoration • Wastewater and water infrastructure • Emergency water and water resources resiliency
Capital Region Climate Readiness Collaborative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ARCCA was formed in early 2012 out of the urgent need to prepare California for the emerging impacts of climate change, including extreme storm events, heat waves, droughts, and sea level rise. Through ARCCA, member regional collaboratives have come together to amplify and solidify their individual efforts, as well as to give a stronger voice to regionalism at the state and federal levels. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • develop a common understanding of regional vulnerabilities and strategies. • Identify regional priorities, efforts, projects, strategies and research needs. • Forum for local and regional leaders. • Coordination support. • Identify and obtain resources. • Unified voice for the Capital Region. • Facilitate information and best practice sharing.
Central Coast Climate Collaborative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • address climate change mitigation and adaptation. • involves representatives from local and regional government, business and agriculture, academia, and diverse community groups to share information and best practices, leverage efforts and resources and identify critical issues and needs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify opportunities for regional action and serve as a clearinghouse. • Coordinate grants development and funding. • Provide a voice to communicate a consistent message. • Inform and empower organizations, communities, leaders and public officials . • Educate the next generation of climate professionals and identify research needs.

Case	Rationale	Objectives
San Diego Regional Climate Collaborative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Areas of focus • Energy efficiency • Coastal resilience • Climate smart water • Climate action planning
Sierra Nevada Climate Adaptation and Mitigation Partnership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • bringing together key voices within the region to vet policy solutions • ... engaging urban downstream communities • ... have leaders from major cities invest in the upper watershed. • mechanism for ensuring that the connection between urban population centers and the rural resources they depend on is recognized and valued. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educate and engage • Convene Sierra stakeholders • Develop and strengthen connections. • Catalyze on-the-ground climate demonstration projects in the region. • Build stakeholder capacity by providing climate action resources, education, and technical support.
Twin Cities Metropolitan Council: Climate Change and Emissions Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Climate vulnerability • Climate adaptation • Inform regional strategies about GHG reduction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce energy consumption for regional wastewater • Increase efficiency of metro transit • Communities choosing to reduce their contributions can: develop more compact land use patterns, reduce auto dependency, improved pedestrian experience, improve urban forestry
Metropolitan Mayors Caucus: Greenest Region Compact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Improve the environment” • Help each other do better environmental planning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consensus environmental strategic plan for the region • Sharing strategies and approaches • Sharing data
New Hampshire Coastal Adaptation Workgroup	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce the risk and vulnerability from extreme events and climate change 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educate • Improve local planning • Support legislation implementation • Assist with strategies to protect shorelines • Improve economic resilience in light of storms and events
Metro Mayors Coalition Climate Preparedness Taskforce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare the region for climate change and to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhance Local Alignment and Capacity Building • Mitigate Heat Impacts across the Region • Mitigate Flood Impacts across the Region • Deepen Regional, State, and Federal Coordination on Public and Private Infrastructure Activities
Eastern Shore Climate Adaptation Partnership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As one of the country's most vulnerable landscapes to flooding, erosion, and sea level rise, the Eastern Shore can become a national model for coastal resilience in rural communities. A resilient Eastern Shore will be prepared for immediate and long-term coastal hazards and able to survive, adapt, and prosper in the face of uncertainty and vulnerability. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1) Identify and support local champions of climate adaptation; • 2) Engage collaborative partnerships; • 3) Integrate climate adaptation strategies into planning processes and policies ; • 4) Encourage the state to expand support for local adaptation; and • 5) Collectively, move the ESCAP toward a sustainable funding and governance model
Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments: Climate Energy & Environment Policy Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • supports the Region Forward vision and Climate Change Report goals by providing leadership on climate change, energy, green building, alternative fuels, solid waste and recycling issues, and by supporting area governments as they work together to meet regional goals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Action Plan offers a variety of voluntary and flexible options for local jurisdictions to implement, including options that directly address emissions from government operations and options that support community action

Case	Rationale	Objectives
Southeast Florida Regional Climate Change Compact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reduce greenhouse gas emissions and build climate resilience • allow local governments to set the agenda for adaptation, while providing state and federal agencies with access to technical assistance and support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RCAP is meant to serve as a tool for municipal and county local governments, • includes a broad set of best practices to guide implementation of emission reduction and resilience-building actions that each jurisdiction can implement. • a framework for concerted regional action rather than a set of directives for specific projects or programs at the local level. • Compact objectives include: (1) advocate for funding; (2) create a regional climate action plan; and (3) support a leadership summit
Los Angeles Regional Collaborative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Measures to reduce emissions • Develop a more climate resilient region 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognizing the need for cross-jurisdictional collaboration • Serve as a convening body to ensure consistency of performance, • Facilitates the exchange of information.
Tampa Bay Regional Resiliency Coalition [Tampa Bay Regional Planning Council]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resiliency • Natural hazards • Sea level rise 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members shall develop a Regional Resiliency Action Plan which shall include strategies for coordinated regional preparation for adaption •
Southwest Florida [Southwest Florida Community Foundation?]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • work to build a coalition of residents across key community sectors, including health, education, faith, business and the environment. • “The partnership is an outgrowth of the climate change survey results released in February,” said Eileen Connolly-Keesler, president and CEO of the Community Foundation of Collier County. “The results were very clear. Southwest Florida residents believe now is the time to take action on this issue. Collective action means we are more powerful when we work together – within and across sectors.” • The recent survey also found that attitudes are changing, and the vast majority of Southwest Florida residents are concerned about the changing climate and believe action is necessary to protect the region’s future. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage stakeholders through educational- and awareness-building efforts • Empower community members and leaders to initiate change. • Understanding of the importance of withstanding the impacts of a changing climate, such as sea level rise, increased extreme weather events and flooding. • Build climate literacy ...and adapt to be more resilient . • Protect natural assets: help the community connect the changing climate to Southwest Florida’s treasured environment, including mangroves, wetlands and dunes that protect the shoreline.