

Northwest

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Key Message 27.1

Frontline Communities Are Overburdened, and Prioritizing Social Equity Advances Regional Resilience

Ongoing systemic oppression disproportionately exposes frontline communities in the Northwest—including low-income urban communities of color; rural and natural resource–dependent communities; and Tribes and Indigenous communities—to the consequences of extreme heat, flooding, and wildfire smoke and other climate hazards (*very high confidence*). Frontline communities often have fewer resources to cope with and adapt to climate change but have been leaders in developing climate solutions within and outside their communities (*high confidence*). Actions to limit and adapt to climate change that prioritize climate justice and redirect investments to frontline communities can advance regional resilience (*medium confidence*).

Key Message 27.2

Ecosystems Are Transitioning in Response to Extreme Events and Human Activity

Ecosystems are expected to change as the climate continues to change and as the magnitude and frequency of extreme events increases (*very high confidence*). Some historical and ongoing human activities reduce ecosystem resilience and the adaptive capacity of species (*very high confidence*). These human activities are expected to exacerbate many effects of climate change (*very high confidence*). Human efforts to enable ecological adaptation founded in ecological theory are expected to improve ecosystem functions and services and reduce exposure to climate-related hazards (*medium confidence*).

Key Message 27.3

Impacts to Regional Economies Have Cascading Effects on Livelihoods and Well-Being

Climate change impacts to the Northwest’s natural resource- and outdoor-dependent economies will be variable, given the diversity of industries, land cover, and climatic zones (*very high confidence*). Impacts to these industries will have cascading effects on community livelihoods and well-being (*high confidence*). While some industries and resource-dependent communities are resilient to climate-related stresses, economic responses to climate change can benefit affected industries, workers, and livelihoods (*medium confidence*).

Key Message 27.4

Infrastructure Systems Are Stressed by Climate Change but Can Enable Mitigation and Adaptation

Recent extreme events have stressed water systems and housing, transportation, and energy infrastructure across the Northwest (*very high confidence*). Extreme precipitation, droughts, and heatwaves will intensify due to climate change and continue to threaten these interrelated systems (*very high confidence*). Given the complexity of and interdependencies among infrastructure systems, an impact or a response within one sector can cascade to other sectors (*very high confidence*). Cross-sectoral planning, which can include redesigning aging infrastructure and incorporating climate considerations into land-use decisions, can increase resilience to future climate variability and extremes (*high confidence*).

Key Message 27.5

Climate Change Amplifies Health Inequities

The Northwest's climate has historically been temperate and relatively mild, but shifting weather patterns associated with climate change are adversely affecting physical, mental, and community health (*very high confidence*). The incidence of illnesses and death during extreme heat events and wildfire smoke days is increasing, and climate change is stressing health systems (*high confidence*). Climate-related health risks disproportionately affect certain individuals and groups (*very high confidence*). Climate resilience efforts can be leveraged to improve health, especially among the most vulnerable populations (*high confidence*).

Key Message 27.6

Climate Change Affects Heritage and Sense of Place

Climate change has disrupted sense of place in the Northwest, affecting noneconomic values such as proximity and access to nature and residents' feelings of security and stability (*high confidence*). Place-based communities, including Tribes, face additional challenges from climate change because of cultural and economic relationships with their locale (*very high confidence*). Leveraging local or Indigenous Knowledge and value systems can spur climate action to ensure that local heritage and sense of place persist for future generations (*medium confidence*).

Interacting Stressors Affecting Salmon Resilience

Stressors stemming from interactions between human activities and natural systems affect freshwater and marine ecosystems and reduce salmon resilience to climate change.

Figure 27.4. Human activities and climate change alter the physical environment in concert, often amplifying their impacts through cumulative effects over the salmon life cycle. They also directly and indirectly alter freshwater and marine systems. Natural systems respond to changes in their environment through both evolutionary and ecological processes. The sum of these many different processes has led to declines in many populations of salmon over decades and reduced their ability to cope with future climate change. Figure credit: NOAA Fisheries.



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