



Water is Life: *Climate Change, Western Water and Public Health*

October 2016

Carpe Diem West is partnering with western water managers, local and state agencies, water justice advocates, climate scientists, and western health sector leadership to develop a common policy and research agenda addressing the challenges of a changing climate and water quantity and quality on health in the American West.

The Rapids Ahead

Climate-related changes to water supply and quality are having significant effects on human health. From outbreaks of vector-borne and infectious diseases, to impacts on nutrition and agriculture, to increased incidences of cardiovascular and respiratory diseases linked to catastrophic wildfires, these effects on water and regional health raise significant public policy, infrastructure, social justice and financing issues for decision makers.

The “separate” issues of health, water, and climate can no longer be disaggregated and addressed in silos. The professionals and activists working in their respective fields need to be aware of the powerful ways in which these issues intersect — to be on the lookout for impacts, to communicate what they see to their colleagues, and to plan collaboratively for the future.

The lack of collaborative discussion is of particular concern in the American West, where climate scientists agree that climate change is significantly altering every aspect of water—its quality, quantity, timing, phase (rain or snow), and temperature. In the West, and the rest of the nation, the longstanding divisions between water managers, social justice advocates, regulatory agencies and health officials have frustrated most attempts at collaboration even before the considerations of climate change.

Program Outcomes

The outcomes for the first year of the program:

- The field is assessed for cross-sector policy and potential strategies for action
- A core leadership group is established
- The convening of field leadership identifies opportunities for cross-sector work, policies, action steps, and priority research needs
- Outcomes from the convening are developed to the next steps
- One to two years of funding is secured, and the on-going work is housed at an appropriate institution