



Marin
Community
Foundation

CLIMATE JUSTICE STRATEGIC INITIATIVE

Climate Change is Here



Over 75,000 households are estimated to be directly at risk from sea level rise impacts in the Bay Area, including over 12,000 in the region's most socially vulnerable communities

Statewide projections see up to a **77% increase** in average area burned and a **50% increase** in the frequency of fires exceeding 25,000 acres by 2100

The Bay Area will likely see annual mean warming on the order of approximately 3.3°F by mid-century

In the past several years, record breaking weather, drought, precipitation, wildfire and rising sea levels here in California and around the world have become the norm rather than the exception. While projected impacts of climate change in Marin County and beyond are stark, there are simultaneously many ways for philanthropy to act on climate to reduce the impacts on our beloved communities.

WHY CLIMATE JUSTICE?

Vulnerable communities face far greater risks and poorer health and economic outcomes from climate change and are less able to adapt to or recover from climate disruptions such as flooding, sea level rise, extreme heat, wildfire and smoke. As sea levels rise, many coastal communities with high surface levels of groundwater, including Marin City and the Canal area of San Rafael, are at greater risk of flooding as groundwater gets pushed upward into homes, buildings and other infrastructure. Due to historic redlining practices, communities of color are often close to industrial sites and have the added risk of buried toxic industrial chemicals intermixing with intruding water.

And when wildfire erupts, job loss and displacement can be devastating to families with no savings or safety net.

Even when fires pose no direct threat to life or property, breathing in toxic **smoke** increases inflammatory responses in otherwise healthy individuals. It is especially dangerous for children, older adults, and for those with heart and lung conditions like asthma—which disproportionately affects African American, Hispanic, and indigenous persons in the U.S.

While extreme heat is unhealthy for everyone, urban, low-income neighborhoods with higher numbers of people of color experience higher temperature differences and more dangerous health impacts.

These examples show why climate change has been called a “threat multiplier” that exacerbates existing conditions, including poverty and other racial and social inequities. Many environmental and social justice advocates continue to fight hard for climate protections, but lack of available and accessible resources and competing urgent needs often stymie efforts to secure the policy wins and infrastructure investments necessary to make all communities truly resilient.

OUR VISION

In the face of these overlapping challenges, we see a once-in-a-generation opportunity: hundreds of billions of dollars will soon be flowing from recent federal and state legislation into local infrastructure projects, renewables deployment, and other approaches to reduce climate risks and create healthier communities.

We believe that by supporting their leadership and input, historically marginalized communities will be better positioned to secure transformative investments that enhance resident well-being and safeguard against growing climate threats.

These unprecedented public funds present an immediate opportunity to resource community climate priorities and projects, while laying the groundwork required to ensure multi-solving for overlapping crises lasts beyond this immediate windfall.

MCF'S ROLE AND STRATEGIES

This initiative is grounded by local communities' needs and opportunities while recognizing the broader natural, political, and economic systems of which Marin County is a part.

To advance this vision, MCF will build upon its recent investments in climate resilience in Marin's low-income and communities of color; will leverage our broad experience with public-private partnerships; and will deepen our trusted relationships with both community leaders and interested donors.

INITIATIVE TIMELINE

We anticipate a five-year timeframe for the Climate Justice Initiative. Initial grant-making guidelines for Marin-based activities will be developed in Fall 2023.

Our work will focus on three strategies:



Advance Equitable Climate Resilience Processes and Projects

We will invest in capacity building and technical assistance for community-based organizations and local governments serving Marin's vulnerable communities to seize near term opportunities and to plan for long term investments.



Expand and Amplify Climate Justice Advocacy

At the same time, we will support advocacy and communications to ensure nonprofits' ability to engage in policymaking processes with a justice lens and will make direct use of MCF's leadership voice in concert with other community foundations.



Catalyze Climate Justice Philanthropy

MCF will also bolster climate justice philanthropy at the local, regional and national scales. In partnership with community nonprofits; other philanthropic institutions and donors; and the public sector, MCF will seek to play a catalytic role, demonstrating the ability of community foundations to be a force for equity in the creation of climate resilient communities.

DATA SOURCES:

Metropolitan Transportation Commission / Association of Bay Area Governments and the San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission [Sea Level Rise Adaptation Funding and Investment Framework Final Report](#), July 2023.

State of California, 2022. [California's Fourth Climate Change Assessment](#).

Pathways Climate Institute and San Francisco Estuary Institute, 2022. [Shallow Groundwater Response to Sea Level Rise](#).

Bay Area Council Economic Institute, 2021. [The True Cost of Wildfires](#).

Howard, Lisa, June 7, 2023. [Wildfire Smoke Increases Inflammation, Lung Disease Risk](#). Retrieved from health.ucdavis.edu/news.

Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America, 2020. [Asthma Disparities in America: A Roadmap to Reducing Burden on Racial and Ethnic Minorities](#). Retrieved from aafa.org/asthmadisparities.