

**Contact:**

**Paige Hopkins**, Climate Justice Organizer:

(541) 543-2454 | Email: [phopkins@beyondtoxics.org](mailto:phopkins@beyondtoxics.org)

**Meet Panchal**, Environmental Justice Statewide Projects Manager:

(541) 543-2448 | Email: [mpanchal@beyondtoxics.org](mailto:mpanchal@beyondtoxics.org)



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## **Ecological Threats, Wildfires and Health Burdens are Top Priorities in First Local Climate Assessment in Lane County**

*The Climate Vulnerability Assessment reveals that Lane County residents are primarily concerned about climate impacts on respiratory health, housing availability, wildfires, and extreme heat. Nearly 70% of locals do not know how to prepare for changes.*

**EUGENE, OR.** – Lane County residents have identified housing availability, health and extreme wildfires among the top concerns as the climate continues to change in dramatic and unpredictable ways. Now, the results from the First Climate Vulnerability Assessment are in ([Climate Change Vulnerability Assessment - PDF](#)). The goal of this assessment is to understand how Lane County residents are affected by climate change now and in the future.

National research and local experiences have shown that the impacts of climate change tend to disproportionately impact marginalized communities, such as communities of color, low-income communities, the elderly, and people experiencing disabilities. The report reveals that Lane County residents are primarily concerned about the following:

- **85%** are concerned about the way climate change impacts their health. Reduced air quality and increased smoke are expected to amplify chronic respiratory problems.
- **63%** are concerned about the way climate change threatens their safety. Increased wildfires in Oregon combined with poor forest management practices are likely to contribute to more intense wildfire seasons.
- **62%** are concerned about the way climate change threatens housing availability as the environment becomes more inhospitable and more climate refugees, from multiple socioeconomic statuses, move to Lane County.
- **47%** are concerned about the way climate change threatens their jobs. Specifically, people are concerned about shifts in job supply and demand due to climate change.

The Lane County Vulnerability Assessment is a report created by the 2021 Climate Equity and Resilience Task Force, a joint project of Beyond Toxics, the NAACP Eugene-Springfield, The Geos Institute and Lane County Public Works Department. The Task Force, a 16-member advisory group made up of county residents from rural and marginalized community groups, met throughout 2021 to gather input from across Lane County.

Lack of water availability is a concern, along with the potential increase in water rates associated with reduced access to water. There is a concern that poor forest management is going to lead to an increase in fire frequency and intensity. The assessment reveals a lack of hope among younger residents and all ages with increasing anxiety about the future.

*“This report is a call to action that sends a clear message: We must continue to develop strategies to address these vulnerabilities to provide a strong and equitable framework for climate resilience in Lane County,”* said Paige Hopkins, the Climate Justice Organizer at Beyond Toxics.

The Lane County Climate Equity and Resilience Task Force is accepting new members from rural and BIPOC communities. The Task Force will host a workshop to develop equitable and resilient strategies for the next phase of the Lane County Climate Resilience Plan. A report on Climate Adaptation Strategies will be presented to County Commissioners later this year. Those interested in more information or becoming a Task Force member may contact Beyond Toxics.

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Beyond Toxics is a statewide environmental justice organization advancing policies that ensure meaningful participation and cultivating grassroots leadership from Oregon’s frontline and impacted communities. Established in 2001, we are a multicultural, inter-generational team dedicated to centering community leaders and building out the true diversity of our state’s vibrant Environmental Justice movement.