Climate! What Can You Do?

Be aware of climate-related impacts to your community and become involved with preparedness. (Are you ready ready for the next power outage?)

Conserve water during times of drought and manage excessive stormwater runoff. (Use cisterns, rain barrels, low-flush toilets and reduced-flow showerheads.)

Let your political representatives know that you care about climate-related challenges. Be part of the solutions. (Vote, write letters, attend town meetings.)

Reduce Your Carbon Footprint, Save Money... and Encourage Others to do the Same!

- Drive less - ride share and take public transportation
- Turn down the thermostat - wear a sweater, close off unused rooms in winter
- Plant thoughtfully - trees for shade, deep-rooted native plants in gardens, low-moisture/low-mow grass
- Go local - reduce the packaging and miles associated with what you purchase
- Reduce waste - reuse, recycle
- Invest in alternative energy

For more information and citations: www.seagrant.umn.edu/climate
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Expect the Unexpected

Frigid winters. Cold springs. Wet and cool Augusts. Warming climate? When the weather conditions you experience extravagantly defy the AVERAGE expectations described by climate experts, remember that climate VARIABILITY also seems to be changing.

Averages make communication convenient, but variability can be more important to talk about when it comes to climate. As an example, although the annual average (mean) air temperature on the western shores of Lake Superior is a cool 38 °F (3 °C), within a given year, residents of Lake Superior communities should be prepared to dress for a tropical 95 °F (35 °C) and a bone-chilling -25 °F (-32 °C).

Opportunities

Change can create opportunities. In the Lake Superior region, adapting may take the form of capitalizing on higher wind speeds, changing growing seasons and developing new technologies. This may lead to...

- More wind turbines
- New crops that thrive in predicted conditions
- Innovative stormwater technologies that accommodate dramatic storms
- Year-round shipping as ice cover diminishes
- Novel ship designs with lower drafts and wider beams that can navigate shallower waters and more extreme storms

Challenges

Extreme weather can have economic consequences through rising insurance premiums, replacement costs and increased maintenance costs. Ironically, along with more flooding, communities can expect to battle more fires. The frequency of forest fires correlates closely with rising temperatures, precipitation patterns and overall soil moisture. The changing climate could challenge the Lake Superior region with...

- Increasing risk of injury due to extreme weather
- Declining traditional recreation revenues from winter activities
- Fewer trout and other cold-water fish
- Higher incidences of problems associated with cyanobacteria, ticks and mosquitoes
- More rescues as people and their boats might be underprepared for intense storms and winds

It's Time to get Analytical About Climate Change!

CLIMATE READY means that communities have worked to recognize and minimize the risk of failed infrastructure, erosion, drought intolerance, fire and whatever else a changing climate may mean. Reducing risk should be regular conduct for individuals; it can be a big impetus for purchasing insurance and resolving to adopt a healthier lifestyle. For a community it means knowing where the vulnerabilities lie, and taking steps to be prepared for unexpected events and a dynamic climate. Climate ready also means recognizing the potential benefit that a changing climate might have on a region. For example, the communities rimming Lake Superior might have longer growing seasons and lower heating bills.

To increase your resilience and the capacity of your community to deal with greater climate variability and weather extremes — experts say DIVERSIFY. Diversify crops, livestock, trees, energy and stormwater management practices. When you diversify, if one system or species fails, there are backups.

Minnesota Sea Grant offers a climate readiness assessment for communities. For more information, contact Minnesota Sea Grant, a Weather-Ready Nation Ambassador.*

*NOAA Weather-Ready Nation: www.nws.noaa.gov/com/weatherreadynation