



Research and Engagement on Adaptation for Climate and Health (REACH) Center

Health in a Changing Environment: Impacts and Adaptation in the WWAMI Region

Executive summary of a symposium hosted for practitioners in the Washington, Wyoming, Alaska, Montana, and Idaho (WWAMI) region

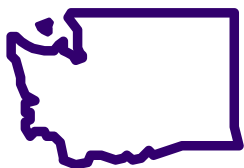
Background

Climate change is increasing the frequency and intensity of climate-sensitive hazards, such as wildfire smoke and extreme heat, which threaten community health. The REACH Center hosted a virtual symposium in July 2025 for practitioners to discuss climate-sensitive hazards, impacted populations, risk reduction strategies, facilitators of and barriers to those strategies, and next steps.

Symposium Participants

Twenty-nine health practitioners from across the WWAMI region participated. Represented sectors included healthcare entities, nonprofit organizations, government agencies, Tribes or Tribal organizations, and academic institutions.

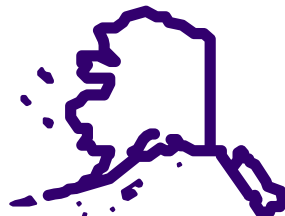
Washington:
8 participants



Wyoming:
6 participants



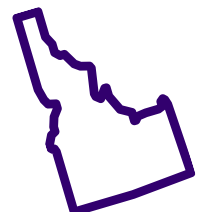
Alaska:
2 participants



Montana:
4 participants



Idaho:
9 participants



Key Takeaways

Participants discussed the following topics. Their responses are summarized below.



Climate-sensitive hazards

Participants most frequently mentioned the hazards of wildfire, drought, extreme heat, and wildfire smoke.



Health impacts

Participants' communities experience physical and mental health impacts linked to climate change. Certain populations are more at risk.



Risk reduction strategies*

Participants pursue strategies including education and risk communication (1), research, and training healthcare providers.



Barriers and facilitators to action

Barriers include funding (2) and political tension. Facilitators include community and organizational support.

*Each state is at a different stage of implementing climate and health interventions. For instance, Washington has seen the most progress, likely due to resources and priorities.

1. Education / risk communication was the most commonly mentioned type of risk reduction strategy.
2. Funding was the most commonly mentioned barrier to climate change and health action.

Recommendations

REACH identified four high-level recommendations to advance climate and health risk reduction efforts in the region:



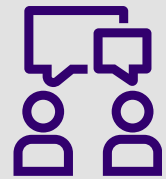
Address climate and health data/research gaps.



Strengthen information-sharing and collaboration amongst a regional network of practitioners.



Center community values and priorities in intervention design and implementation.



Communicate the importance of climate and health action to decision makers.

Read the full report: change.deohs.washington.edu/community-engagement-0

This fact sheet is a summary of a full-length report, available at the link above. Report citation: C.C. McCarthy, A. Reed, A. Meyers, G. Conley, R. Patel, T. Busch Isaksen. 2026. "Health in a Changing Environment: Impacts and Adaptation in the WWAMI Region." Report prepared by the University of Washington Research and Engagement on Adaptation for Climate and Health Center, Seattle, WA.

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