Preparring for Change

Sitting at the confluence of two major rivers and receiving rainfall only half the year, Sacramento is vulnerable to the vagaries of Mother Nature. Flooding, droughts, storms, and even sea-levels are all factors that play a role in our water supply and livelihoods. Climate change means greater variability in extremities, beyond those already experienced. Records show California has had a shift in timing of the rainy season over the last century; it’s shirked by 50 percent and in some weeks earlier. There has also been a trend toward greater rainfall that snows during our wet months.

Climate models project that Natomas’ future will include longer dry spells, periods of heavier rain when it does storm, and reduced summer water supplies. Precipitation projections show the total amount may stay the same, but it will come in strong bursts, with potentially longer dry spells in between. These larger extremes, on both the wet and dry ends, are the result of a changing climate. Work of California’s precipitator takes place in just three months: December, January, and February. This winter was the driest on record, and the State faces a potential 4th year of drought next year (a chart for recent drought!). As time goes on, scientists will be better able to determine the impact of climate change on droughts, but if these are indicators of a trend toward lower precipitation, preparing for change is already important.

The Natomas area has seen a temperature increase in the past century between 1 and 2°F. Just because it’s not 10°F daily all summer doesn’t mean there isn’t global warming. The globe warms, and individual places can become warmer, or maybe cooler, others place become warmer or cooler. This is the reason behind the term ‘climate change.’ The Natomas area is likely to become gradually warmer in 50 years’ time, to the tune of 4°F on average. Biologists say this warming will have an impact on local plant and animal habitats, pests and wildfire risk. The State of California has a team of experts looking at the models to determine which forms of saliva are the most likely. Local communities will need to make appropriate adaptation plans and make their own decisions as to the best strategies for their residents. Yes, all of this is new. The responses to a changing hydology are similar to those that are good water management at all times; emergency preparation, conservation, having a diversity of water supplies, and choosing storage options that best handle the environment as well as supply. Preparing in Natomas is primarily focused on the aspect that threatens this area the most: flooding. In order to reduce flood risk, major improvements to the perimeter levees protecting Natomas began in 2007, by the Sacramento Area Flood Control Agency, using State and local funds. The remaining work to provide at least 200-year flood protection (1 percent chance of flooding at any year) will be done by the Corps of Engineers. (See sidebar article on levee improvements legislation).

Saturation projections show that by 2050, the entire central valley is projected to be saturated. Only in the past 100 years have we experienced such conditions, but this is a clearer indication of our new normal. California is projected to experience longer, dryer periods, and an earlier start to winter. The only driver of dry conditions, but it does mean wetter springs. One thing California is projected to experience longer, dryer periods, and an earlier start to winter.}

Prepared for Change

Elissa Lynn is the Chair of the California Climate Change Technical Advisory Group and former TV Chief Meteorologist in Sacramento. She is also a longtime Natomas resident.

Paul Drowne, MD, Director and Elissa Lynn, Chair of the California Climate Change Technical Advisory Group and Natomas resident.

Sacramento Area Flood Control District 1000 General Manager Paul Drowne notes, “The levee improvements recently completed and those anticipated in the near future are truly made in less susceptible to climate change; but we still need to be vigilant and ready to adapt in terms of our infrastructure, operations, and communications.” Residents in Natomas are currently required to carry flood insurance (if they have a mortgage) until the levee improvements are completed and the losses certified. Even after completion, property owners in Natomas living behind levees are required to carry flood insurance (available from the National Flood Insurance Program) that is subject to annual renewal.

Preparing for Change

Elissa Lynn is the Chair of the California Climate Change Technical Advisory Group and former TV Chief Meteorologist in Sacramento. She is also a longtime Natomas resident.

Paul Drowne, MD, Director and Elissa Lynn, Chair of the California Climate Change Technical Advisory Group and Natomas resident.

Sacramento Area Flood Control District 1000 General Manager Paul Drowne notes, “The levee improvements recently completed and those anticipated in the near future are truly made in less susceptible to climate change; but we still need to be vigilant and ready to adapt in terms of our infrastructure, operations, and communications.” Residents in Natomas are currently required to carry flood insurance (if they have a mortgage) until the levee improvements are completed and the losses certified. Even after completion, property owners in Natomas living behind levees are required to carry flood insurance (available from the National Flood Insurance Program) that is subject to annual renewal.