



PRESS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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City of Aspen Recognized with Highest Regional EPA Award for Aspen Global Change Institute's Report on Impacts of Climate Change to Aspen

Award ceremony 1p.m. Wednesday, May 9, Conner Park, Aspen, CO

ASPEN, CO – The EPA is recognizing the Aspen Climate Impacts Assessment in conjunction with the City of Aspen's leadership in commissioning the project as a tool for motivating action on global warming. On Wednesday, May 9, the agency will honor the City of Aspen with the EPA's Environmental Achievement Award for its initiative in undertaking the report, titled "*Climate Change and Aspen: An Assessment of Impacts and Potential Responses*," authored by the Aspen Global Change Institute. Completed in 2006, the Aspen Global Change Institute conducted the study as part of Aspen's Canary Initiative. The award, granted by the United States Environmental Protection Agency Region 8, is the region's highest award and recognizes outstanding contribution to environmental protection. The report is an in-depth scientific assessment of the potential climate, ecological and socioeconomics impacts of global warming for Aspen and the region. A pioneering study, it is one of the first climate impacts assessments to focus in on such a small geographic area.

The award will be presented to Mayor Helen Klanderud and city staff at 1 p.m. Wednesday, May 9 in Conner Park by Steve Tuber, EPA Assistant Regional Administrator for the Office of Partnerships and Regulatory Assistance, Region 8. John Katzenberger, Director of AGCI, and other contributors to the report will also be in attendance.

About the Aspen Climate Impacts Assessment

Assessment Team

The assessment team for the Aspen Climate Impacts Assessment included Stratus Consulting, Aspen Global Change Institute, Wildlife & Wetland Solutions, Center of the American West at the University of Colorado, the Rural Planning Institute, and TN & Associates. A National Advisory Panel of some of the top climate scientists from the National Center for Atmospheric Research, major universities and government research labs provided expertise and climate model output for the study.

Climate and Snowpack Modeling

Historical climate observations, current trends and computerized climate models forecasted possible future climate scenarios in Aspen. The study employed snowpack modeling to analyze all four of Aspen's ski mountains, and yielded detailed information about the snowpack of Aspen Mountain. The analysis found that Aspen's climate has already experienced change, and that in the future more of Aspen's precipitation will fall as

rain rather than snow, significantly reducing Aspen's snowpack. By 2100, temperatures in Aspen are projected to warm by 6 to 14 degrees F, depending upon how aggressively the world commits to reducing emissions.

Ecological Assessment

A literature review and vegetation modeling were conducted on the ecological impacts of climate change in mountain ecosystems, focusing on potential catastrophic effects and shifts in biomes as a result of climate change. The research suggested that strong local warming will force some plant and animal species to move up to higher elevations, and will increase the likelihood of insect outbreaks. Additionally, hotter spring and summer seasons are projected to lead to larger and more intense wildfires during the first half of the 21st century.

Socioeconomic Impacts

The study examined the relationship between changes in ski area conditions and changes in skier behavior, and the resulting effect on the Aspen economy was quantified. Continued growth of global greenhouse gas emissions is projected to end skiing in Aspen by 2100, and possibly well before then. In the spring and summer months, changes in streamflow volume and timing may negatively affect the rafting industry; a drier overall climate will demand increased irrigation for agriculture, further increasing pressures on water resources.

Streamflow Analysis

An additional section on streamflow analysis was made possible by a grant from the EPA to assess the impacts of climate change on surface water quantity and quality in the Roaring Fork watershed and possible adaptation opportunities. Stakeholder interviews identified key water uses and ecosystem resources that are likely to be most impacted by changes in surface water flows. Streamflow modeling indicated that peak runoff will occur earlier in the spring. Because of a decline in snowpack, summer and fall stream flows will be reduced, possibly declining below the minimum needed to protect aquatic species and increasing the potential for water shortages.

The full report can be downloaded at www.agci.org. Printed copies may be ordered by contacting AGCI at (970) 925-7376.

For more information on the study, contact John Katzenberger, director of the Aspen Global Change Institute at johnk@agci.org or (970) 925-7376. For additional information on the award, contact Frank Montarelli, Senior Public Affairs Advisor for EPA Region 8 at Montarelli.Frank@epamail.epa.gov or (303) 312-6780.

AGCI is a Colorado 501 c 3 non-profit founded in 1989 dedicated to furthering the scientific understanding of Earth systems and global environmental change through interdisciplinary science meetings, publications, and educational programs about global change science.

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