



RESILIENT COMMUNITIES AND WATERSHEDS

PROGRAM UPDATE

Fall 2017

About the Program

The Lincoln Institute of Land Policy and Sonoran Institute have launched a new joint program, Resilient Communities and Watersheds, to address a fundamental lack of integration between land use planning and water management in the western United States.



Our Focus: People and Nature

Within the Colorado River basin, the confluence of fully appropriated water systems, rapid population growth, and increasing uncertainty in the face of climate change requires the development of new tools and policies for land use and water resource planners alike. Our focus will be on pioneering approaches in research, collaborative community planning, capacity building, and policy engagement to improve land and water planning in the Colorado River basin.

Our vision is one where water resources meet the demands of both people and nature ensuring healthy watersheds and prosperous communities across the Colorado River basin. One where cities and towns, farmers and ranchers, and industry and conservation organizations work collaboratively to use land efficiently and conserve water as communities grow.

The Program

Our work will be comprised of basin-wide activities as well as local work in the upper- and lower-basins. It will be carried out in a collaborative fashion so that local efforts can inform policy and actions at the state, regional, and federal level, helping to scale successful solutions across the entire basin.

“Increased conservation, reuse, and better integration of land use and water planning will help maintain a healthy environment, promote livable and sustainable cities, and preserve agricultural production into the future.”

Colorado Water Plan



Jeremy Stapleton

STRATEGIES FOR RESILIENT RESULTS

Community Assistance Programs

1. Develop assistance programs that introduce communities to the full range of communications, public engagement, planning, and policy implementation tools to realize their watershed health and community resiliency goals.

Result: Land use planning and policy making at the jurisdictional level is consistent with available water resources and communities act to improve the health of watersheds.

Research

2. Research and promote “water resilient” design elements, collaborate on plans and projects that integrate these elements, and explore market and investment strategies that bring together private capital and other funding sources to encourage more sustainable development patterns.

Result: Land development, buildings, and infrastructure are water efficient and promote watershed health.

“...ecosystems in the Colorado River Basin provide between \$56.5 billion and \$466.5 billion in economic benefits every year.”

David Batker et al.
Earth Economics



Jeremy Stapleton

Jeremy Stapleton, aerial support by LightHawk



Sonoran Institute



Jeremy Stapleton



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Local Leadership Development

3. Nurture leadership locally through our community assistance programs, further engage these leaders through basin-level convenings, and eventually link them to ongoing policy initiatives at the state, regional, and federal level.

Result: Strong leadership emerges that expands the constituency for policies that bring the Colorado River basin into balance, providing water for both people and nature.

Knowledge Exchange + Capacity Building

4. Share lessons learned, case studies, and best practices with land use planners, water resource managers and policy makers at all levels of government both within and outside of the basin.

Result: Awareness among decision makers increases around the need for action and successful responses.

Evaluation + Evolving Best Practices

5. Evaluate plans and policies within the basin and other large river systems to identify the most impactful practices, develop a common set of basin-wide performance metrics, and engage a wide range of stakeholders to bring forward recommended policies and actions.

Result: The Colorado River basin is brought into balance, meeting the needs of communities and the environment, by federal, regional, and state actions that promote healthy watersheds and resilient communities.

“Over 16 million public and private sector jobs in the basin region rely on the availability of Colorado River water each year.”

Tim James et al.
Professor, Arizona State University



Jeremy Stapleton



Jeremy Stapleton



Joseph Gilpin



Sonoran Institute



Jeremy Stapleton

Basin-wide activities will provide elected officials, city managers, community planners, water resource managers, and community leaders with research, education, training, and networking. The program will direct them toward policy reform initiatives, advocacy campaigns around land use and water, and potential resources to enact them.

In the Upper basin the work will begin in Colorado. As the primary headwaters of the Colorado River and home to one of the fastest growing regions in the basin, the state presents significant opportunities for innovative urban water stewardship that help preserve ecosystems and rural ways of life. Communities are responding to the state's first water plan and are seeking new tools to meet their goals.

In the Lower basin the work will focus initially on Arizona. Among lower basin states, Arizona has the most diverse water supplies, allowing it greater flexibility in pursuing urban water conservation and innovation. It includes the Sun Corridor—from Nogales to Prescott—another rapidly growing region in the Colorado River basin, which is governed by a state groundwater management law. These policies provide an important foundation for future urban land use and water policy reforms.

All program activities will be designed to build broad local and state constituencies committed to balancing water and land use.

For more information about current activities, please go to www.sonoraninstitute.org/rcw

To learn the latest about upcoming activities and opportunities, follow us on Facebook and Twitter, or contact climateresilience@sonoraninstitute.org.

Support the Sonoran Institute

Your support preserves the environment for future generations and makes a lasting impact in communities across Western North America. Learn more about how you can help at SonoranInstitute.org/donate.

About the Lincoln Institute

The Lincoln Institute of Land Policy is an independent, nonpartisan organization whose mission is to help solve global economic, social, and environmental challenges to improve the quality of life through creative approaches to the use, taxation, and stewardship of land.

About the Sonoran Institute

The Sonoran Institute's mission is to connect people and communities with the natural resources that nourish and sustain them.

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