

Climate Change: Opportunities

Climate-Recreation Alignment & Advocacy

- "Recreation is conservation" is an emerging and compelling organizing argument — supported by scientists, lawyers, and community members — that frames trail and recreation infrastructure investment as a climate solution
- Trails can serve as tools to help the Forest Service get ahead of fire risk, creating natural partnerships between recreation infrastructure and forest management
- Fire mitigation and recreation planning should be integrated and funded together, representing a significant untapped opportunity if policy and funding frameworks can be aligned
- Connecting recreation infrastructure investment to fire mitigation funding could unlock substantial new resources currently unavailable to recreation projects
- Strong alignment exists between recreation projects and county Resource Resiliency Roadmap goals, as well as GHG reduction, wildfire resilience, and emergency preparedness objectives
- The scoring rubric requiring 40% of project benefits to flow to disinvested communities per SB 535 definitions ensures climate investments address equity alongside resilience

Workforce Development Connections

- Overlapping seasonality of wildfire mitigation and tourism creates year-round workforce development opportunities — workers can move between trail restoration and fire mitigation work across the calendar year
- Workforce connectivity between ecological restoration, trail work, and wildfire mitigation is actively being explored as a career pathway model
- Dead tree management from fire snags and Sudden Oak disease, while burdensome, generates consistent annual work that could anchor durable workforce pipelines

Season & Visitor Behavior Shifts

- Reduced snowpack has extended recreation seasons into previously off-season months (January and March), bringing additional visitors and new revenue opportunities
- River visitors — 80% of whom travel from out of town — are increasingly likely seeking relief from valley heat, creating a climate-driven demand driver for regional recreation
- Visitors are increasingly motivated to experience natural environments before climate change and disasters alter them permanently, creating urgency-driven demand
- The region's outdoor adventure economy (backcountry skiing, individual expeditions) is more resilient to snowpack variability than a resort-dependent model

Climate Change: Opportunities- continued

Ecotourism & Restoration Synergies

- Environmental restoration projects for kelp and oysters are generating new ecotourism opportunities — including kelp forest diving, oyster sales to restaurants, and bike and kayak rentals
- Environmental restoration and ecotourism are developing in tandem, offering a replicable model for connecting climate resilience investment to visitor economy outcomes
- A \$200,000 Groundwork San Diego ecotourism project funded through Catalyst creates park space with natural stormwater capture and bike trail connections while directly addressing flooding risk

Funding Alignment Potential

- Strong potential connections exist between Proposition 4 funding and forest management; grantmakers need to be more open-minded about multi-benefit projects spanning recreation, forestry, and watershed health
- Current year conditions — moist ground and stable weather — are favorable for construction, creating a near-term implementation window
- Climate change considerations are actively being incorporated into campground infrastructure redesign and planning, positioning projects for future climate funding alignment

Climate Change: Challenges

Climate Funding Gaps & Misalignment

1. **Federal climate resilience and mitigation funding is not available** for recreation infrastructure projects despite strong alignment with climate goals
2. **Proposition 4 climate bond funding has not reached recreation work**; fire-related funding is available but does not extend to recreation amenities
3. Despite climate change informing campground redesigns, **projects have not yet secured climate-related funding**
4. **Climate funding decisions favor high-population areas** — Central Valley, Bay Area, and Sacramento — with money flowing disproportionately away from rural regions with greater ecological need
5. A Sierra Nevada Conservancy grant application that included recreation components for a river crossing was denied for **not being "shovel ready,"** illustrating the gap between project readiness and funding access
6. **Geographic disparities make equitable distribution of climate-related tourism investments structurally difficult**: coastal communities and inland disinvested communities compete for resources with very different baseline capacities to absorb and leverage investment

Wildfire Threats

7. **Wildfire is the dominant and growing climate threat** across forest recreation areas, affecting work schedules, visitor enjoyment, and employee job stability
8. Wildfire damage creates remediation work but also forces trail advisories that reduce visitation, with **downstream economic effects that are difficult to quantify**
9. White fir die-off on Gateway trails has required extensive hazard tree removal; tree death accelerates soil drying and trail degradation, **compounding maintenance burdens**
10. Dead tree management from both Sudden Oak disease and fire snags has become a **perpetual annual burden with no dedicated funding stream**

Snowpack & Precipitation Shifts

11. **Reduced snowpack and rising snow levels threaten the viability of Nordic Center** operations at current elevations — putting core community infrastructure at long-term risk
12. The region depends on snowpack at 5,000 feet for healthy watershed and creek flows; **reduced snow accumulation raises serious concerns about long-term water availability**
13. The region **lacks the ski resort infrastructure to capture high-elevation snowpack**, making it more exposed to climate-driven precipitation shifts
14. Minimal snow in recent years forced ski resorts to **close early, with direct revenue impacts** on communities dependent on winter recreation

Climate Change: Challenges - continued

Visitor & Operational Disruption

15. **Climate unpredictability fundamentally disrupts visitor planning** — people book travel months in advance and cannot easily adjust; one event saw 18 inches of snow fall after resorts had already closed, costing millions in lost revenue
16. **Reduced visitor confidence translates directly to declining rural economic activity** — less lodging, food, and service spending in communities that depend on it
17. Ski resorts face **difficult staffing decisions during warm periods** when snow may or may not return; outdoor retailers report that unpredictable conditions are affecting purchasing behavior
18. **Average temperatures have risen several degrees** during the rideable and hikeable season, and storm patterns have become increasingly erratic — late-season snowfall, early rainfall, and prolonged dry spells are all increasing

Infrastructure & Design Gaps

19. Recreation sites are generally **not designed for climate stressors** or emergency response needs
20. Recreation infrastructure is **not yet systematically redesigned to withstand climate-driven conditions**
21. Sea level rise poses a significant long-term risk to Humboldt Bay and the Eel River Valley, **threatening coastal recreation and access infrastructure**
22. Flooding is an emerging concern with **serious implications for trail infrastructure integrity**

Maintenance & Organizational Sustainability

23. Extended wet seasons and erratic conditions **disrupt project timelines and organizational capacity** in ways that are difficult to plan around
24. New weather patterns now require a second brushing pass within a single season, **adding unbudgeted maintenance costs**
25. Shorter and less predictable seasons directly threaten organizational sustainability — **financial precarity is inseparable from climate-driven season compression**
26. **Organizational stability is a prerequisite for sustained community work**; climate impacts that undermine financial viability ultimately undermine everything built on top of it