The 2023 Maine-New Hampshire Climate Networks Exchange "Climate Migration"

Workshop Report[1]

A Joint Workshop convened by the Maine Climate Change Adaptation Providers Network and the New Hampshire Coastal Adaptation Workgroup
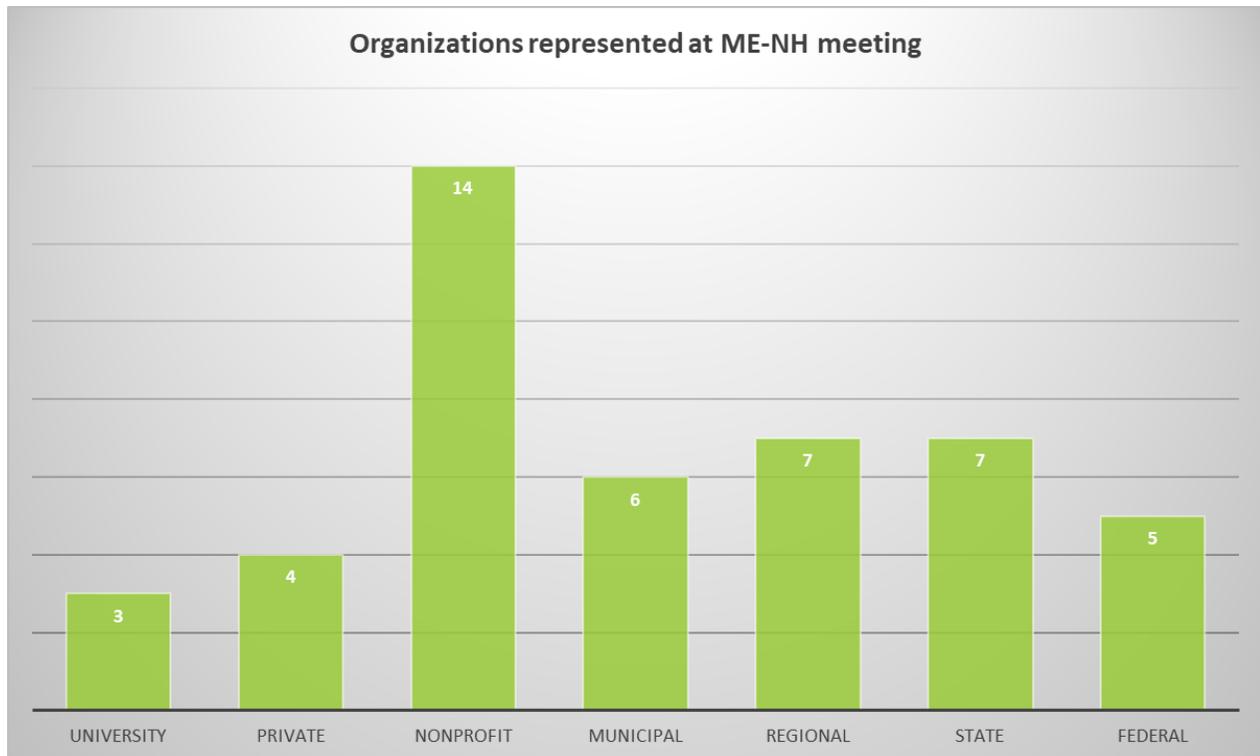
March 9, 2023
South Portland (Maine) Community Center

Scene-Setting

On March 9, 2023, the New Hampshire Coastal Adaptation Workgroup (CAW) and the Maine Climate Change Adaptation Providers Network (CCAP) collaborated to host a single-day workshop on community preparedness for climate migration (the agenda can be found here). In addition to serving as the groups' joint annual convening, the gathering also advanced the objectives of a NOAA-funded Climate Adaptation Partnership project, *A Northeast Safe & Thriving for All* (or NEST), that several CAW and CCAP members are involved with. The workshop provided an opportunity for practitioners and community representatives to come together and discuss drivers, trends, and implications of—as well as potential responses to—climate migration.

The objective of the workshop was to foster a network prepared for and responsive to climate migration, by sharing information and perspectives, identifying information and engagement needs, exploring what preparing for climate migration means, and building relationships among existing and new partners. The research questions we sought to inform through the day's deliberations include:

- **RQ 1:** What forms of climate migration exist in the region and to what extent do existing adaptation research, policies, plans, and projects address these issues?
- **RQ 2:** How do class, race, Tribal status, political ideology, and residency status (rural/urban, local/part-time) shape vulnerability to and perceptions of climate migration? What issue areas and aspects of equity, justice, and repair do different groups identify as important for climate migration planning to consider?
- **RQ 3:** What regional governance gaps inhibit efforts to support climate migration that is just and equitable? How might a regional science-policy/practice network meet these gaps?

The morning session involved presentations on current demographic and economic research on migration across the region, along with a panel discussion featuring state-level policymakers. The afternoon began with a World Cafe arrangement where the meeting's 75 participants were divided into 6 groups, each considering a similar set of questions but for two distinct scenarios: one for a town *decreasing* in population, and the other for a town *increasing* in population. Common themes, information gaps, and personal reflections were shared as a full group to wrap up the gathering.

The workshop audience was primarily current members of CAW or CCAP, which includes climate adaptation experts, community planning professionals (including municipal, regional, and state officials), and academic and non-governmental organization staff. Additionally, meeting organizers made a concerted effort to invite participants who are *not* already part of the existing CAW and CCAP networks, such as those representing state housing authorities and non-profits, the real estate industry, land conservation organizations, Tribal Nations, immigrant services organizations, transportation infrastructure, and youth. We ended up with about a 60/40 participant ratio of existing network members to non-members, which represented success in broadening the conversation and expanding the network.

Organizations represented at ME-NH meeting

(Bar chart showing counts by organization type: UNIVERSITY = 3, PRIVATE = 4, NONPROFIT = 14, MUNICIPAL = 6, REGIONAL = 7, STATE = 7, FEDERAL = 5)

Morning Presentations

Overview of Climate Migration in ME+NH

Linda Shi, Dept. of City and Regional Planning, Cornell University
PI, NOAA NEST grant
[Recording](#)
[Slides](#)

Question & Answer:
Q: Was COVID-19 a precursor of what climate migration will look like for us?
A: A lot of people moved during the pandemic, but we are unsure if they will stay or move back to where they came from. What we can see in the COVID migration is that it was very class-based, and a migration pattern that may or may not reflect future climate migration. It is likely that a more diverse group of people may be moving in the future.

Q: ME and NH are more rural - what can ME and NH learn from larger cities' migration events?
A: By and large, after natural disasters, people leave rural areas to move to cities. Hard to say whether rural communities will be able to attract large numbers of people. Lewiston is not a large city, but has gained a significant number of refugees. Different types of movers will look for different places to move.

Blue Hill (Maine) Bay Case Study Analysis

Rachel Bouvier, Dept. of Economics, University of Southern Maine
rbouvier Consulting
[Slides](#)

Question & Answer:
Q: What guidance would you offer for this type of baseline assistance?
A: Trying to measure what happens in small communities is difficult. Data shows one thing; experience may show another. Piece together both and survey the population to understand what is going on at the ground level.

Q: What is the socioeconomic class difference between people leaving and people arriving in the area?
A: There's often a tendency to blame outsiders for everything going wrong. A lot of people moving into Blue Hill may be wealthy, but they often have a connection to that place, a reason for choosing that peninsula. They may expect more services. An interesting question to ask is how incoming populations affect social capital; how many people are going to town meetings, PTA events, social events, etc? Social capital is important for community well-being.

Q: What brings that sense of place that draws people to a place
A (Hans Carlson, Blue Hill Heritage Trust): If the land continues to be surrounded by a rural landscape, that leads to the sense of place of this area.

Panel Discussion: "Why is Climate Migration an Issue Right Now?"

Panelists

- *Judy East, Director, Bureau of Resource Information and Land Use Planning, Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation & Forestry*
- *Ryan Fecteau, Senior Advisor, Community Development & Strategic Initiatives, Maine Governor's Office of Policy Innovation & the Future*
- *Ben Frost, Deputy Executive Director & Chief Legal Office, New Hampshire Housing*
- *Kirsten Howard, Resilience Program Coordinator, NHDES Coastal Program*

Summary of Initial Comments from Panelists:

Judy East
- Unorganized townships in Maine experiencing 25-40% increase in building permits
  - Building on existing lots and accessory dwelling; people are moving there in part because of access to broadband
- Maine has big PULL factor – great place to live
- Number of shore hardening permit requests going UP
- There is potential for social friction resulting from displacement of current residents by higher income migrants

- Municipalities in general are not prepared and lack planning for in-migration
- Rural areas have less planning and preparedness around climate change
- Maine has the ability to accommodate growth, but the carrying capacity of infrastructure is vulnerable
- Planning for climate resilience in small municipalities is CRITICAL
- One option is to increase density (accessory dwelling units, tiny homes; visualizations key); need to address notion that increase in density is considered by some a "bad thing"
- Retrofits – need to prepare for substantial increase in federal funding
- Statewide and regional planning also very important
- Need help from social scientists to sort through cultural differences

Ryan Fecteau
- Most people moving to Maine in 2021 were under age of 45; good information from *MaineBiz*
- Pre-existing challenges in Maine (e.g., oldest housing stock in the nation)
- Transportation emissions dominate statewide emissions profile
- 1 in 5 pay more than half of income in housing cost
- 2.9% vacancy rate... not much supply
- Remote work is changing possibilities; can bring employment opportunity to Maine
- 30% increase in price of housing cost
- MA, NH, FL top 3 coming to ME; CA#5
- Need an in-depth analysis of housing needs in ME, to provide insight into what our housing needs would look like with significantly larger populations
- Increasing amount of houses being built, but still falling short on supply

Ben Frost
- Rental Vacancy in New Hampshire is 0.5% (target is 5%)
  - 48% sale price increase over 4 years
- Need 23,000 units today to meet 2% vacancy rate
- Covid-19 migration: primarily moving from Boston to Mt Washington Valley, Waterville Valley
  - This created some new conflict
- Currently in worst housing market – in terms of affordability – EVER
- Building at recessionary levels
- Need more houses and are not building them!

Kirsten Howard
- When people escape from Boston – stay longer in northern NH – potential for conflict
- Municipal officials bringing this up; maybe time to start planning for it!
- Need to better understand how people, community and ecosystems changing because of SLR
- Matt Hauer research suggest potentially 15 million displaced in future
- Hampton flooding 100 times per year
- So important to dig into the nuance at local level

Question & Answer:

Q: What changes in our tax structure will be necessary, how do we begin that process? What differences exist regarding readiness to accept federal dollars?

A: IRA funds potential for housing; regional revenue sharing; in NH wait a generation before addressing tax structure

Q: Regarding the intersection of housing with climate migration: At the state level are you seeing the conversation brought together?

A: Legislature is a reactionary body, focused on immediate issues, not focused on the intersection of these issues. People are going to continue to be moving and we don't have the housing to cover what we have currently, let alone what is to come with climate migration.

World Café: "How Can Our Communities Prepare for Climate Migration?"

In the World Café event, participants were divided into 6 groups of approximately a dozen participants each. Each group included both a facilitator and a notetaker. For thirty minutes, three groups considered a community that was *decreasing* in population due to climate-related migration, while the other three groups were asked to consider a community that was *increasing* in population. Then the groups switched tables (those at the "decreasing in population" tables moved to "increasing in population" tables and vice versa) for another thirty-minute discussion.

Each of the six groups addressed the same set of guiding questions:
1. Who is moving?
2. What challenges arise in this scenario?
3. What opportunities arise in this scenario?
4. What does a prepared community look like in this scenario?
5. What plans, policies and programs do we need to be more prepared?

A synopsis of responses to these questions are below. A complete set of notes is found [here](#).

Community Decreasing in Population

1. Who is moving?
   - People who historically lived there but no longer can
   - People who can no longer afford to live in the area
   - Coastal homeowners experiencing repetitive flooding or can't afford property taxes or flood insurance
   - Fishing community; natural resource industries
   - Young people leaving after school
   - Young families
   - Retirees
   - Multi-generational families, with their local knowledge
   - People who need specialized services (e.g. health) elsewhere

2. What challenges arise in this scenario?
   - Loss of local knowledge
   - Loss of civic capacity
   - Loss of tax revenue; decreasing tax base
   - Loss of working waterfront
   - Loss of health care & social service providers
   - Cascading impacts
   - Decrease in local involvement/decreased civic engagement
   - Brain drain
   - Decline of housing stock/old homes degrading
   - Decreasing community/social groups
   - Lack of specialized health care
   - Short term rentals
   - Food deserts
   - Municipal government panic/short-term thinking decisions
   - Mental health/moral grief
   - Isolation
   - Limited ability to adapt
   - Lack of services, public health, emergency, education
   - Decrease in municipal mutual aid agreements
   - Loss of economic sectors
   - Vacant buildings
   - Loss of planning capacity

3. What opportunities arise in this scenario?
   - Visioning for a new future - beneficial transitional change
   - Eligible for grants
   - Lower costs
   - Less development/more open space (could attract outdoor recreation; lead to environmental benefits such as air quality and conservation)
   - Repurposing areas for recreation
   - Strengthen regional services
   - Land construction opportunities
   - Diversification of economy
   - Managed retreat
   - More rental opportunities
   - Land reconfiguration/re-claim flooded land
   - Rezoning; preparing for redevelopment
   - Affordable housing more available

4. What does a prepared community look like in this scenario?
   - Look for money, capacity to fund support (grants)
   - Regional collaboration among towns
   - Strong connections with place
   - Adequate municipal capacity
   - Proactive land use planning and zoning
   - Leveraging existing expertise
   - Intersectional planning
   - Break down silos of communication
   - Pay attention to where opportunities exist
   - Call on outside resources (e.g. regional)
   - Existing partnership (or new ones)
   - Create programs & culture to be welcoming
   - Foster civic engagement
   - Demonstrate small successes
   - Market unique qualities and strengths of community
   - Demolish cursed buildings and reclaim land
   - Expand working waterfront with increase of accessible space
   - Retain workforce by shifting economic focus to new opportunities
   - Identify local champions, strong leaders
   - Tourism-based economy
   - Being flexible
   - Partner with other communities; mutual aid; consolidate
   - Long range comp plan

5. What plans, policies and programs do we need to be more prepared?
   - Regional intersectional planning
   - State support that reflects intersectionality
   - Emergency planning and management
   - Community access to services, tax and financial incentives
   - There is potential in small communities
   - Climate vulnerability assessment, specifically referencing social vulnerability
   - Community resilience plan and funding programs, including visioning of what is happening, what the future looks like, and how to sustain the valued and vital services in a decreasing community. Make resilience plans adaptable for frequent updating.
   - Smart Growth
   - Hazard mitigation plans
   - Nature based solutions
   - Relocation support
   - Proactive buy-outs with a land protection plan
   - Affordable water treatment
   - Be open to change
   - Funding programs
   - Community input
   - Funding resources across communities (e.g., Southern Maine Planning & Development Commission regional grant)
   - Trainings for community organizations
   - Comprehensive planning
   - Strong leadership
   - Documentation/data/monitoring trends
   - Towns working with each other; consolidation

Community Increasing in Population

1. Who is moving?
   - Urban, high income remote workers
   - Wealthy home buyers
   - Wealthy retirees
   - People from Northeast cities (Boston, NYC)
   - People from within ME/NH moving north
   - People with multiple homes switching residency to ME/NH
   - Young adults who moved away for college returning home to live with parents because can't afford housing
   - Short-term rentals
   - People with historic ties
   - Climate migrants
   - People at risk of heat or air quality issues
   - Refugees and asylum seekers
   - Young people/peer groups
   - Unhoused people
   - Community seekers
   - Musicians, artists, writings, people looking for culture
   - Magnet for new tech jobs
   - Middle class with jobs with flexibility
   - People who already have some connection to the place or people here
   - Some people may still leave (e.g. younger working class who can not afford housing, people with resources to leave, people in natural resource economies, recent graduates, older people)

2. What challenges arise in this scenario?
   - Rental replacement with AirBnB
   - Increasing unhoused population
   - Health care and other services unable to meet demand
   - Changes to way of life/sense of place
   - Economic consequences (price increases)
   - Displacement of people
   - Stress on infrastructure
   - Increased polarization due to changing community

- Balancing development with conservation
- Lack of affordable housing
- Inadequate planning capacity; no planning for increased density
- Stress on schools
- Stress on recreational and open spaces; pressure on biodiversity
- Development pressure
- Stress on energy sector
- Stress on water quality and quantity
- High expectations of services

- Increase in property values
- Social inequities and marginalization
- Unplanned sprawl
- Those who arrive with no way to integrate
- Working remote jobs without local connections, no reason to engage (civic engagement challenge); social isolation/ no sense of belonging
- Culture wars
- Still need to deal with climate impacts here

3. What opportunities arise in this scenario?
   - Younger generations returning
   - More attention and receptivity to planning
   - Municipal revenue increases/increased tax base
   - More volunteers
   - Cultural shift, increased diversity of people/increase in diverse perspectives
   - Improved energy efficient housing
   - Learn from other places
   - Broadband expansion
   - New work sectors; increased workforce

   - New services (e.g. better sewer systems, health care, transit)
   - Smart Growth
   - Better restaurants
   - Reduction in median age
   - More and fresh engagement
   - Increased innovation; brain gain
   - Purchasing power of well-off people who come here with pay from a city
   - Improved walkability in more dense city centers
   - More caregivers for aging population; allows for aging in place

4. What does a prepared community look like in this scenario?
   - Strong comp plans, long-range planning, visioning, zoning
   - Forward thinking municipal government
   - Intersectional conversations around resilience, housing, EMS, social services
   - Strong community engagement
   - Learning from other places
   - Climate vulnerability assessment
   - Updated natural resources inventory
   - Collaborations with service providers
   - Regional planning
   - Willingness to work proactively
   - More dense housing standards/zoning
   - Accommodate existing workforce; plan for people who want to stay in community

   - Need for community spaces for gathering
   - Increase staff at municipalities
   - Welcoming cities process and certification
   - Capital improvement and growth plan
   - Integration into civic life
   - Process in place for being ready for increased diversity
   - Coordinated conversations about climate change
   - Safe, walkable wildlife corridors
   - Being intentional; proactive
   - Ecosystem services appropriately valued and safeguarded

5. What plans, policies and programs do we need to be more prepared?
   - Climate resilience plan
   - Vulnerability assessment
   - Adopting newer model ordinances
   - Transportation
   - Draw on social capital
   - Community involvement
   - Resilience
   - Be willing to change and check in
   - Inclusive process; inclusive leadership
   - Reliance on volunteers

Plenary Discussion

Post-it note exercise

Participants were asked to put their answers to the following questions on post-it notes, which we then typed up and summarized:

Who should be involved in community preparedness?
- Community members; people who aren't already at the table (besides community leaders)
- Community leaders; people with current knowledge
- Youth
- Diverse groups; people who represents all parts of the community
- People from all economic classes
- All levels of governance, community, regional, state and federal
- People involved in critical infrastructure
- People who work with natural resources; use their knowledge in the planning process
- People trained to help navigate change; social workers/ behavior and mental health
- Educators; teachers, or people who work in this field who can spread their knowledge

What additional information and/or engagement do we need to better plan?
- Case studies of communities that have dealt with population loss/gain
- Oral histories/anecdotal data
- Understanding community values and goals
- Projections of demographic change
- Risk tolerance based and scenario planning
- Indigenous knowledge
- Community engagement
- More regional and local strategy around housing and conservation
- Land use and planning analyses for Smart Growth
- Hazard/ risk vulnerability assessment
- Better understanding of communities as an ecosystem
- Regional housing analysis

Plenary Discussion Notes

What themes stand out to you from today's discussion?
- Struck by how optimistic you all are
- We can't just focusing on flooding – important to broaden planning to encompass other climate risks
- We've been talking about climate migration re: people coming to Maine from other parts of the country/world; another part of the conversation is getting out of harm's way within Maine itself – brings up questions re: abandoning infrastructure - where and when?
- Property tax implications, property rights
- Surprised by focus on anticipating more people, less attention on decreasing communities
- No regrets strategies – out of harm's way; how do we get to those solutions; we have a lot of zoning/planning solutions that we're still not implementing; also need to get more people at the table and not move too quickly; maybe there are some steps we can take in the short-term while also trying to build the coalition/consensus

What stands out to you about this network of people in relation to this work?
- Emphasis on communicating between lots of different groups/sectors
- Representation from folks who are moving to new communities (refugee resettlement agency, groups working closely with climate migrants)
- Life experience of people in the room – where they lived/live, how they're showing up in the space, having a farm or aquaculture site – what people are bringing to the conversation
- Assumption – is everyone employed? That's something that stands out.
- Technocrats, professionals – we have a safe place in this; but it's a human problem
- We're all descended from people who successfully migrated – we have a bias; need people who accept that we have to give up things
- How many people would not identify first as a climate professional – maybe ~10 (better than usual)
- Who here also volunteers/serves in their community in some way? What can we take from today not just to our work roles but also in our communities/volunteer roles?
- Haven't heard any voices from indigenous community – that's very important
  - It's really a slow, long conversation, much more of a listening mode vs. just a 'hey can you pencil us in for that date;' let's do the work authentically in response to what is important to them; climate is one piece; sovereignty is important; entering into relationships with a long-term commitment
- Careful about not going too far down in shaping the conversation without the broader voices at the table – that's the risk of having these conversations without those voices; think about how to counter that
  - Bringing voices in early enough but not prematurely...

Post-Meeting Evaluation Survey Results

In the wake of the meeting, participants were invited to complete an evaluation survey; hardcopies and online versions were available. In addition to assessing progress in achieving the meeting objectives, the evaluation aimed to obtain personalized reflections from the day's discussions and inform potential next steps. Below are the questions asked related to personalized reflections, along with a brief synopsis of illustrative responses received from the 35 participants who responded.

1. *What aspects of climate migration concern you most?*
   The availability and affordability of housing was far and away the most common response. Others aspects receiving multiple responses included: stress on infrastructure, services, and natural resources; and the ability to evolve existing / integrate new sociocultural perspectives
2. *For whom are these concerns most relevant?*
   Low-income community members was the most common response, with multiple participants also highlighting elderly, youth, and historically marginalized (e.g., Tribal, BIPOC, immigrant/asylum seekers) groups.
3. *What gaps in data, policy, programs or practice are priorities to fill?*
   Land use planning and zoning policy that is cognizant of physical climate impacts and the consequent social impacts; highly-localized information on drivers of and trends in out- and in-migration; Training in and ability to plan under uncertainty—particularly within small, resource-constrained communities
4. *What aspects of climate migration or how it's being addressed do you feel most optimistic about?*
   There was encouragement that the conversation had started—and that there was a recognition that it's an intersectional issue that necessitates many of the types of people who were present at the workshop. Attendees also saw opportunities for community growth and evolution under climate migration—whether a population was increasing or decreasing.
5. *What are the most important steps for a network like this to take next?*
   Broadly speaking, there was a consensus that the conversation needed to continue—that this group needed to capitalize upon the momentum built at this conference for raising the visibility of the issue of climate migration. In addition, several respondents noted the need to expand data collection efforts to inform smarter planning decisions

Synthesis, Common Themes, & Next Steps

(*analysis by meeting facilitators*)

1. <u>Complexity</u> – intersection of social, environmental & economic factors - it is difficult to tease apart the various causes and effects, especially when cascading effects are possible in either scenario. This is a complex systems in which the factors like housing, environment, social issues, etc all intersect
2. <u>Intentionality & preparedness is key in the face of uncertainty</u> – Accepting the changes and being proactive in being prepared will make the difference between communities that suffer the challenges of migration compared to those who take advantage of the opportunities.
3. <u>Regional collaborations will be essential</u> – Due to the limited capacity in many local governments, strengthening the roles of regional planning commissions may help provide the technical expertise needed to be prepared. However, is there willingness to share local control?

4. <u>Need for proactive state efforts to provide support and guidance to local preparedness</u> – There is a role for state agencies, such as the ME Governor's Office of Policy Innovation and Future – to help communities prepare. Many of the tools, such as Smart Growth, are not new, but state guidance in choosing the right tools and incorporating them into local plans will be helpful.
5. <u>Community cohesion/social capital</u> – maintaining and building it will be very important. In either scenario, of decreasing or increasing population, there will be potential impacts on the connections among community members and among organizations. Additional work should be done to think through how to maintain and build upon this social capital in both types of scenarios.
6. <u>Work on inequities now before they get exacerbated by migration</u> – In either scenario, there are inequities, such as tensions between higher and lower income individuals, or between cultures of those living in a community. These have the potential to increase when populations change and waiting until then to address them will only be more difficult than starting those hard conversations now.

Meeting Outcomes (analysis by meeting facilitators)

In addition to the themes that stood out to us, some tangible outcomes from the meeting include:
- The event successfully elevated the concept of climate migration onto the broader public agenda in the region
- Began to develop a systems understanding of climate-related migration impacts
- Fostered a stronger, more inclusive network of partners interested in municipal-, regional- and state-level preparedness for climate migration