



INTRODUCTION: UC DAVIS CENTER FOR REGIONAL CHANGE REPORTS



JONATHAN K. LONDON, PH.D.

**CENTER FOR REGIONAL CHANGE
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, DAVIS
JUNE 2021**

Preferred Citation: Jonathan K. London. 2021. California's Clear
Lake Region: Introduction. UC Davis Center for Regional Change.

Introduction

The following reports present research by the UC Davis Center for Regional Change (CRC) commissioned as part of the Blue Ribbon Committee for the Rehabilitation of Clear Lake (BRC). The BRC is funded by the State of California's Natural Resources Agency through Assembly Bill 707 (AB 707). AB 707 is a visionary bill authored by Assemblymember Cecilia Aguiar-Curry, that directs state funding to promote applied research to inform the development of strategies to rehabilitate the water quality and health of the Clear Lake environment and to promote the well-being of the Lake region's residents and communities. The BRC is the local leadership organization responsible for developing these funding proposals, consisting of leaders from the environmental, economic, and civic sectors, including representatives of the seven tribal governments of the Lake region.

Assemblymember Aguiar-Curry invited the CRC to provide assistance to the BRC with a focus on the health and well-being of the Clear Lake communities. In turn, the CRC was contracted by the California Natural Resources Agency to conduct socio-economic research to support the work of the BRC. This is a critical element of the overall strategy to improve the health and well-being of residents of the Clear Lake region communities. This is because the health of Clear Lake and the health of the Clear Lake communities are interdependent. The human communities depend on the lake for the economic vitality of the region, in the form of jobs and revenues from lake-oriented businesses, (primarily tourism and hospitality). Similarly, the lake depends on the vitality of the community in the capacity to maintain investments in ecosystem restoration and overall engagement of residents in stewardship of the lake. Similarly, eco-friendly businesses that support lake quality depend on educating the training the next generation of environmental and natural resource scientists and professionals.

As one important example, lake area tribes are and have been active and effective stewards of the lake and its broader environment for millennia, and their cultural and economic health depend on the lake. Furthermore, many of the tribes have sophisticated environmental and natural resource departments that collect and conduct crucial

environmental monitoring to guide lake protection and restoration. The CRC's work reflects this social-ecological model.

The CRC's work included the following elements.

1. A white paper report on the engagement of tribal governments and communities in the planning and recovery from wildfire and other disasters.
2. A white paper report on community and region-wide strategies for planning and recovery from wildfire and other disasters.
3. A socio-economic report on key drivers of community prosperity and well-being, (including demographics, housing, economic development, workforce, and the structure of the industrial sector.)
4. A series of issue briefs on key aspects of community-economic development, (including environmental education, youth and workforce development, agricultural and natural resource tourism, and broadband development).

Together, these deliverables are intended to highlight the key issues, challenges and opportunities facing the residents and leaders in the Clear Lake region and to offer information that can inform the recommendations of the BRC to promote the well-being of the region.

Methods

The CRC worked in close partnership with the BRC and its Socio-Economic Subcommittee (SES) to develop, review, and refine its projects. CRC staff attended all BRC and SES meetings over the course of the project period (2018-2021) and presented drafts of work products throughout the process. The final CRC products reflect the crucial guidance of the members of the SES, the broader SES, BRC members, BRC meeting attendees, and other area stakeholders.

The community engagement process for obtaining local input for our products included the following.

Tribal engagement

Our team spoke with 21 leaders from the area Tribal governments in interviews and focus groups. These were identified by the tribal representatives of the BRC and through recommendation of meeting participants.

Community-economic development

Our team conducted 13 key informant interviews with leaders in the economic development sector of the region. These were identified with the support of members of the BRC.

The team ran 9 focus groups in the four community-economic development themes identified above. In total, these focus groups involved 50 participants, (as some of whom were members of more than one focus group).

The following section summarizes these recommendations. This list combines the two white papers on disaster planning and recovery and presents the recommendations from the four community-economic briefs in their own sections. The socio-economic report does not include recommendations.

Recommendations

The CRC's work is built on the foundation of several values. These values serve as the basis of the recommendations in all of the CRC's reports.

1. Decisions and strategies to revitalize Clear Lake and its surrounding communities must be informed and led by area residents and stakeholders and reflect their needs, interests, and visions.
2. These strategies must take into account and support the interests of the residents in the most disadvantaged communities (such as low-income people and people

of color), and those historically marginalized by public policy and planning, (such as tribal residents and governments).

3. These strategies must take a holistic approach that integrates actions to protect and steward the natural, social, and economic well-being of the Clear Lake region.

Local and tribal disaster planning and recovery

Pre-Disaster Planning

- Identify ways to build upon existing disaster management plans and initiatives
- Continually update the hazard/mitigation plans
- Conduct a social and economic vulnerability analysis
- Identify and assess community recovery capacity
- Establish recovery priority areas
- Adopt visionary recovery ordinances
- Support capacity of small and minority-owned businesses to weather economic shocks and promote strong and diversified local economy
- Address existing social and economic disparities to promote equitable vitality
- Promote broad community participation in planning efforts
- Encourage sufficient business and home insurance
- Work with regional partners and jurisdictions on collaborative approaches

Post Disaster Recovery

Economic Recovery

- Identify potential inhibitors to fostering stabilization post-disasters
- Implement recovery strategies to facilitate robust problem-solving among economic recovery stakeholders
- Remove barriers to building post-disaster economic resilience
- Prioritize local businesses for recovery investments

- Emphasize cash aid over material donations

Health and Social Services

- Identify potential and actually affected populations, groups, and key service provider partners in recovery and recovery planning efforts
- Monitor and continue to assess evolving community health and social service needs
- Protect the health and safety of recovery workers during and post-disasters

Housing

- Assess interim housing needs
- Assess and identify options for permanent housing during pre and post disaster recovery for tribal community members and other local residents
- Prioritize low-income residents through affordable housing programs
- Mitigate gentrification and displacement pressures in rebuilding phase

Infrastructure Systems

- Support community engaged pre-disaster recovery planning that includes local and tribal governments at the regional and system wide level
- Leverage resources available in the community and externally for local and tribal governments to support and build capacity
- Rebuild local transportation networks for improved economic vitality

Environmental Stewardship

- Facilitate direct experiences with nature and connect/reconnect identity in relation to nature in the rebuilding phases
- Connect values, actions, and outcomes to environmental stewardship and ensure options for the protection of environmental resources have been explored and implemented to the maximum extent possible

Recommendations on Community Economic Development

Environmental Education

- Develop new and enhanced environmental education programs to ensure the active engagement of youth and the community to promote values to protect environmental resources. Ensure the active engagement of local experts, including Tribal governments and residents, educators, scientists, environmental/natural resource managers, farmers, and others in building the programs. Create an accessible and comprehensive collection of current environmental education programs and resources related to the lake to improve coordination across public, non-profit, and private sectors.
- Develop a multi-site and mobile education infrastructure that offers educational experiences such as interactive exhibits, opportunities for hands-on community science, and educational programming. Consider using the new Lake County Office of Education site at the Taylor Observatory, the proposed Lucerne Water Lab, tribal land locations, schools, parks and restoration areas, and others for these purposes.
- Create a Clear Lake Environmental Education Roundtable (CLEER) that brings together K-12 and community college educators, area tribes, non-profit organizations, public agencies, local scientists, and other interested parties to coordinate and leverage their programs and resources.

Agricultural and Natural Resource Tourism

- Identify agricultural commodities for export and local tourist consumption, and leverage unique natural resources for recreation and tourism opportunities.
- Leverage and coordinate local government policies and planning practices, (e.g., rural zoning codes), to support a successful tourism sector.
- Diversify the local economy to ensure a well-balanced and sustainable foundation that benefits from, but is not solely dependent on, tourism.

- Enhance the narrative about Lake County and the Lake region based on its unique natural and cultural features as a draw for tourists.

Youth and Workforce Development

- Strengthen the college to career pipeline through partnerships between K-12, community colleges, and business sectors.
- Focus attention to include historically underserved populations and places in the region.
- Leverage local educational resources to support environmental and natural resource-based career development.
- Connect cultural elements of the lake region with restoration and revitalization efforts.
- Utilize a community economic development approach that emphasizes local businesses and a diversified and sustainable local economy.

Broadband

- Strengthen data collection at a granular level to more accurately reflect broadband access gaps in Lake County.
- Pursue short- and long-term funding strategies that enable widespread, high-quality broadband access in Lake County.
- Explore alternative methods for broadband access appropriate for rural communities such as Wireless Internet Service Providers and Community Service Districts.
- Create a coalition of local government, business, and civic organizations as an umbrella structure to increase broadband access and infrastructure in Lake County.

Conclusion

Together, these recommendations are intended to provide the basis for the consideration of the BRC as it creates funding proposals to support the revitalization of Clear Lake area communities. In some cases there are very specific action steps recommended, and in other cases broader direction is provided. In all cases, the CRC encourages the BRC to support a holistic and inclusive planning process to ensure that all strategies promote sustainable and equitable development of the Clear Lake region, aligned with the goals of AB 707 and the visions of the area's diverse residents.

References

Abrams, Carolyn, Sara Watterson, Jonathan K. London. 2021. Improving Rural Broadband Access in Lake County, California. UC Davis Center for Regional Change.

Abrams, Carolyn, Sara Watterson, Jonathan K. London. 2021. Building a Youth Workforce Pipeline for the Clear Lake Region. UC Davis Center for Regional Change.

Brazil Noli, Asiya Natekal, Carlos Becerra. 2021. California's Clear Lake Region A Socioeconomic Profile. UC Davis Center For Regional Change.

Visser, M.Anne., Clare Cannon, and Leslie Panyanouvong. 2021. Five Core Areas to Support and Promote Recovery to Natural Disasters: Insights from Tribal Communities in the Clear Lake Region. UC Davis Center for Regional Change.

Volzer, R.V. Alexander and Clare Cannon 2021. Practices For Rural Economic Development After Disasters for Lake County, Ca, UC Davis Center For Regional Change.

Watterson, Sara, Jonathan K. London. 2021. Strategies for Growing Environmental Education in Lake County, California. UC Davis Center for Regional Change.