

2021 Manifesto

Climate Migration and Managed Retreat (CMMR) Member-Led Interest Group of the American Society of Adaptation Professionals

Background and Purpose

This manifesto was developed by the Climate Migration and Managed Retreat (CMMR) member-led interest group of the American Society of Adaptation Professionals (ASAP). It was developed collaboratively with CMMR members in 2020 based on two years of shared learning through a monthly speaker series and interactive meetings. First and foremost the manifesto is meant to serve CMMR members in documenting our shared understanding, aspirations, values and guidelines as we work together to shape the CMMR field. The manifesto serves as a foundational piece to inform other activities of CMMR, including a companion piece on policy recommendations. We will also use the manifesto to introduce the work of CMMR to our potential collaborators and policy makers.

Introduction

Climate-induced relocation, from the individual to the international, is one of the most serious societal challenges of our time, and it is, right now, only in its infancy. As climate change continues to have disproportionate impacts across populations— causing displacement, migration, and resettlement from hyperlocal to global scales — climate adaptation professionals are uniquely situated to transform these challenges into opportunities by addressing historic injustices and laying the foundation for more resilient and equitable communities moving forward. Climate migration represents an emerging field of practice where we hope to reimagine a more positive path and transformative future as an alternative narrative to the current path of human suffering.

Addressing Climate Migration and Managed Retreat (CMMR) requires a transdisciplinary approach that accelerates the transfer and translation of knowledge between research and professional practice, links the maturing climate adaptation field with the fields of social justice, immigration reform and humanitarian aid, and implements innovative policies and initiatives. The intersection of these and other CMMR-adjacent fields will continue to evolve as the climate changes, such that these fields may continue to converge. Our emphasis will be on implementation, moving beyond knowledge and linkages to an actual change to practice.

Guiding Principles

The CMMR group uses the following principles and concepts to develop and deliver our work:

- **Shaping the field:** CMMR is committed to advancing the field by collecting and organizing information for members to become familiar with the current state of research and practice, including trends, terminology, best practices, tools and available resources. CMMR cross-sects numerous professions already engaged in shaping the field, including but not limited to: planning, engineering, public policy, realty and real estate development, housing, immigration and refugee resettlement, demographics, economic development, hazard mitigation, emergency preparedness, environmental justice, change management and conflict resolution.
- **Leading with justice:** CMMR acknowledges the discriminatory, racist, and oppressive housing, transportation, economic, and environmental public policy in both historical and present-day community development. Climate displacement is a stark outcome of climate inequality and therefore an important subtopic under the broader heading of climate justice. Within the American Society of Adaptation Professionals (ASAP), CMMR serves as a member-led interest group learning from and alongside the Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (JEDI) Committee.
- **Recognizing inevitable land use change:** CMMR envisions rethinking the concept of growth and its relationship to sustainability principles, helping to guide development away from risky areas and facilitating the inevitable changes in land use brought on by climate displacement. We will provide resources and assistance for communities wishing to retreat from or otherwise manage displacement-related risks, as well as communities wishing to welcome and prepare for climate-induced migrants.
- **Delineating climate contributions from impacts:** CMMR embraces and aims to amplify in its work, the growing recognition that there are significant inequities between communities contributing most to climate change and those being hardest impacted. Whether these inequities occur within a city or on a macro-scale where emissions in the global north are influencing climate migration in the global south, it is crucial to integrate the people into greenhouse gas accounting protocols to move beyond jurisdiction-based inventories to justice-based inventories in order to build the capacity for our most impacted and at-risk communities. This includes considering peace and equity principles in developing offsets, trading mechanisms, and policies guiding managed retreat.
- **Global problem, local solutions:** Migration and managed retreat needs to be addressed at the local level, even though the conditions inducing displacement are the result of global climate emissions. Our work is focused on both climate displacement in the United States as well as the contributions from U.S. communities to global climate migration. We hope to learn from and inform global climate migration policy and practice in order to translate and expand our impact. As such, our work is solutions-oriented and focused on addressing global climate migration through local context-based action at all scales of policymaking. We believe in building off what's already working by translating and expanding land use, disaster management, immigration, economic recovery, and other policy instruments into a climate migration context.
- **Navigating challenges and maximizing benefits:** While a daunting challenge, there can be benefits to communities that embrace forward thinking and leadership on this topic, including the potential for revitalization and innovation from welcoming an influx of diverse community members displaced by climate change. Our goal is to create an

actionable narrative around the importance of preparing for climate-related opportunities in addition to the climate risks.

- **Empowering positive change:** CMMR believes we can make a positive difference on this topic by empowering ourselves and others to take action and elevate the conversation within our professional practice. This requires transformational systems thinking both personally and professionally within our practice, while being deliberate in empowering those most impacted by climate-induced migration not only to collaborate, but to lead in developing the solutions.

Conclusion

We know that climate change is a 'threat multiplier' because it is exacerbating existing climate hazards and pushing socio-economic, infrastructure, and natural systems beyond their capacity. One resulting impact is severe and unequal disruption for communities now being forced to consider how and where they can live.

While the focus has often been on mitigating the key driver of climate change by reducing fossil-fuel related greenhouse gas emissions, climate professionals now must also address yet another threat and perhaps the most dramatic physical consequence for our species - climate migration and managed retreat from increasingly uninhabitable environments. This complex and emerging reality is being driven by multiple accelerating trends including sea level rise, increased frequency of extreme flood and drought, deforestation, globalization, and many other second-order impacts such as reduced access to healthy food and clean water.

The costs and risks of inaction are made more clear as we learn about the impact of climate change on our world. The CMMR group's work strives to advance this understanding and this growing field of practice so that we may forge new paths along a trajectory that produces a future of more regenerative, equitable, and sustainable outcomes for all.