

Scientists and American Indian tribal members talk climate change realities at AAAS

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Despite an above average snowpack and several months of wet weather, drought and changing climate conditions continue to plague farmers and ranchers across Nevada and other western states.

For American Indian communities in Northern Nevada, the consequences of a changing ecosystem are severe and will impact generations to come, according to new research and outreach presented today at the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) Annual Meeting in Washington, D.C.

Led by Maureen McCarthy, Ph.D., Tahoe and Great Basin Research Director at the University of Nevada, Reno, a unique symposium titled "Climate, Water, and the American Indian Farmer" explored the impacts of climate change, Indian land tenure and [water](#) rights, and changes in land use on American Indian communities dependent on farming, ranching, and sustaining cultural and natural resources.

"American Indian tribes currently possess some of the most senior water rights available," McCarthy explained. "Yet extreme, ongoing droughts in our region combined with changes in winter precipitation timing and form are complicating the allocation and use of water in the West and stimulating Tribes, States, and the Federal Government to negotiate equitable and sustainable water right settlements to ensure traditional and production agricultural practices are available to future generations.

"These issues are complex and transcend ecological and sociopolitical boundaries. Knowledge generated and shared through this program will build capacity among tribal and non-tribal organizations to respond to a changing climate."

The AAAS symposium highlighted work underway on two significant research and public outreach projects led by the University of Nevada, Reno and the Desert Research Institute, in partnership with the U.S. Geological Survey and other institutions.

Provided by Desert Research Institute

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