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Wildfires and Housing Shortages Top Priorities in Lane County's First Climate Assessment

The Climate Vulnerability Assessment reveals that Lane County residents are primarily concerned about climate impacts on housing availability, wildfires, and extreme heat. Nearly 70% of locals do not know how to prepare for changes.

EUGENE, OR. – Lane County residents have identified housing availability and extreme wildfires are among their top concerns as the climate continues to change in dramatic and unpredictable ways. Now, the results from the first Climate Vulnerability Assessment are in ([Climate Change Vulnerability Assessment - PDF](#)). The goal of this assessment is to understand how Lane County residents are affected by climate change now and in the future.

National research and local experiences have shown that the impacts of climate change tend to disproportionately impact marginalized communities, such as communities of color, low-income communities, the elderly, and people experiencing disabilities. The report reveals that Lane County residents are primarily concerned about the following:

- **85%** are concerned about the way climate change impacts their health. Reduced air quality and increased smoke are expected to amplify chronic respiratory problems.
- **63%** are concerned about the way climate change threatens their safety. Increased wildfires in Oregon combined with poor forest management practices are likely to contribute to more intense wildfire seasons.
- **62%** are concerned about the way climate change threatens housing availability as the environment becomes more inhospitable and more climate refugees move to Lane County.
- **47%** are concerned about the way climate change threatens their jobs. Specifically, people are concerned about shifts in job supply and demand due to climate change.

The assessment, the first of its kind for Lane County, also reveals a lack of hope among younger residents and, overall, increased anxiety about the future. One respondent said: “*Why get a master's [degree]? The planet is dying.*” People are less inclined to pursue higher education because they believe it will not help curb the current consensus of impending doom.

Another respondent said: “*My fear is that with an influx of both marginalized and affluent groups escaping climate catastrophe, the public/private dualism of our education system will become increasingly prevalent and lead to further systemic injustices.*” Public education must be adequately funded to ensure that everyone in our communities has some input over how our youth is educated.

“*This report is a call to action that sends a clear message: We must continue to develop strategies to address these vulnerabilities to provide a strong and equitable framework for climate resilience in Lane County,*” said Paige Hopkins, the Climate Justice Organizer at Beyond Toxics. The Lane County Climate Equity and Resilience Task Force will hold a workshop in the spring to discuss equitable and resilient strategies for the next phase of the Lane County Climate Resilience Plan.

Beyond Toxics is a statewide environmental justice organization advancing policies that ensure meaningful participation and cultivating grassroots leadership from Oregon's frontline and impacted communities. Established in 2001, we are a multicultural, inter-generational team dedicated to centering community leaders and building out the true diversity of our state's vibrant Environmental Justice movement.