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Planning for Climate Change in the West offers regional planners techniques for addressing climate change concerns while they focus on issues affecting regional growth.

A warmer and dryer climate in the mountain states along with federal policies to reduce green house gas emissions affects regional planning. The report provides examples how local action does reduce levels of greenhouse gas emissions and energy consumption when planners modify building codes, land use policies covering open spaces and forests, water use and transportation routes.

Planning for climate change in the mountain West requires an understanding of barriers created by local political, demographic and cultural conditions. Since there are climate skeptics among politicians and government staff in the intermountain west, the report identifies strategies to use when developing land and designing buildings that lessen the impact on climate change.

This Policy Focus Report acknowledges the critical role of local planners in confronting challenges posed by climate change. Local officials engaged in planning for climate change must focus on the economic savings of mitigating and adapting to climate change as they tailor federal and state efforts to suit local and regional needs. Managing regional growth by focusing on effective water management, energy generation and transportation management leads to sustainable communities. Buildings which conserve energy, reduce water needs and are located near regional transportation help local governments and consumers save money and reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the mountain west.

The report includes a survey of government staff and elected officials in the Intermountain West indicating skepticism about climate change. Accordingly, Western planners are emphasizing sustainability or economic efficiency, rather than climate change, in their decisions to manage water supplies, reduce energy consumption, increase transportation efficiency, and protect open space.

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