

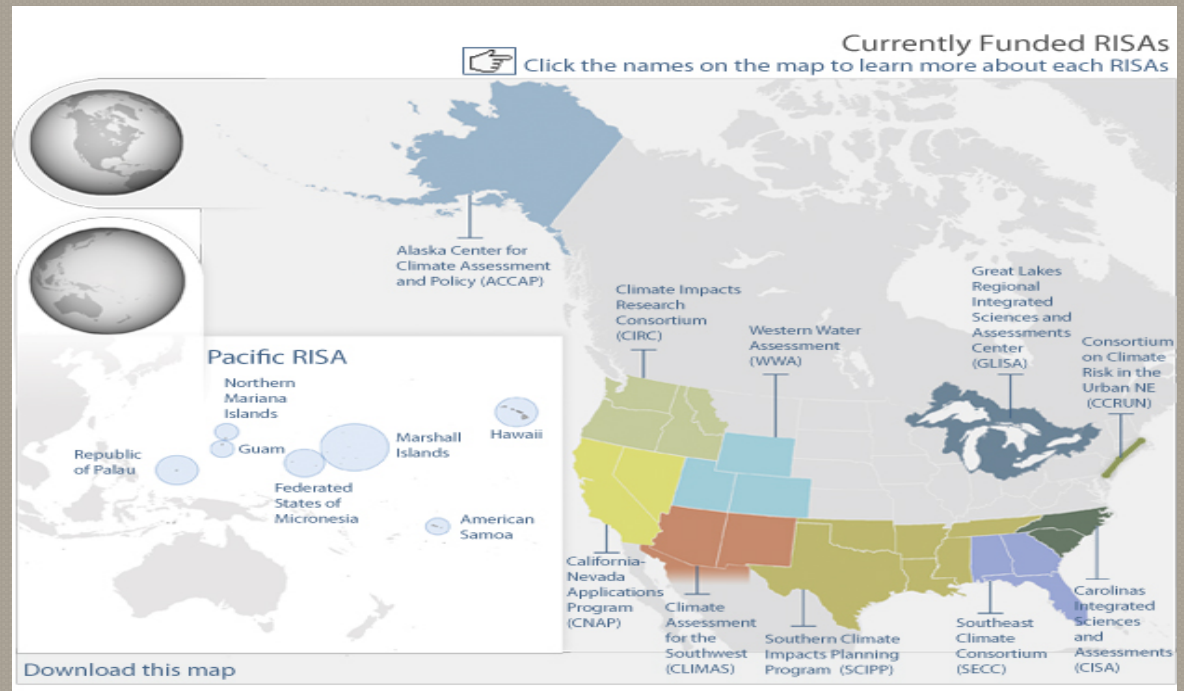
# Assessing Needs and Decision Contexts: RISA Approaches to Engagement Research

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Assessments**

**Based on C. Simpson, L. Dilling, K. Dow,  
K. Lackstrom, M.Lemos, and R. Riley  
In *Climate in Context* (Forthcoming)  
A. Parris, G. Garfin, K. Dow, and R. Meyer, Eds.**

# What is a RISA?

- NOAA supported teams emphasize iterative engagement with decision-makers
- 11 teams
- 20 years of experiences



# Mission

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- Help expand and build the nation's capacity to prepare for and adapt to climate variability and change

## Approach

- Commitment to process, partnership, and trust building
- RISA teams work with public and private user communities to:
  - advance understanding of context and risk
  - support knowledge to action networks
  - innovate services, products and tools to enhance the use of science in decision making
  - advance science policy

# Engaging Decision-makers

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- ◉ Iterative engagement between producers and users does not happen in a vacuum getting it started may take an organization willing to foster, and often create from scratch, the conditions necessary to produce usable knowledge

# Co-Production

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## ◎ Co-production

- New knowledge and the application of that knowledge produced as a **joint venture** between scientists and decision makers

# What conditions foster opportunities for co-production and other engagement?

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- ◉ Long-term funding support
- ◉ Time allows teams to build **relationships** with decision-makers
- ◉ Developing regional **partnerships**
- ◉ Deep regional knowledge
- ◉ Understanding decision-makers' **decision context**



# First questions applied to understanding decision context

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- ◉ Q1: What is the existing decision making context with respect to climate?
  - What decisions are climate-sensitive?
  - How sensitive?
  - What are the time frames in which climate-sensitive decisions are made?
  - Are they using any type of climate information?

# The next questions depend on the answers to the first

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- What are the contextual factors that influence decision-making and use of climate information?
  - For example, how do the political, social, and economic environments in which people operate affect their willingness to use climate information?
- What are the intrinsic factors that influence decision-making and use of climate information?
  - Is climate information accessible and available at appropriate temporal and spatial scales?
  - Do decision makers consider the information credible, legitimate, and salient?
- What are the specific climate information needs of decision makers?
- These answers change with time and increased knowledge of decision-making.



# Implications for Methods

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- All RISAs have Program Managers to think about overall interactions with decision makers
- Work with intermediaries like Extension, NGOs and other boundary organizations
- Need a combination of
- Formal science-oriented methods
  - Social, natural, engineering sciences
  - Often interdisciplinary and/or multiple scientific approaches
  - Some processes are long
- Informal process-oriented methods
  - Focus on maintaining and building relationships and supporting ongoing dialogue about climate-related issues
- Formal method design should take regional relationships into consideration
  - Be attentive to the balance when working with decision-makers as partners and conducting social science research on them as users of information
  - Choose approaches that are more interactive (e.g. several focus groups rather than surveys)
  - Avoid decision-maker and stakeholder fatigue

# Value of Informal Methods

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- ◉ Part of the way to maintain relationships
- ◉ Help build the “information broker” role of the team
- ◉ Contribute to building knowledge networks
- ◉ Provide insights into decision context

# Informal Method Examples

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- Many resemble participant observation:
  - attending annual meetings organized by decision maker groups
  - connecting with decision makers during breaks
  - presenting posters at regional and sectoral conferences
  - supporting community educational events
  - serving on various regional committees
- Listening carefully and taking notes
- Convening workshops, meetings, and conference calls
- Working with an advisory committee
- Co-production of research

# Methods Considerations

Methods	Pros	Cons
<b>Participant observation</b>	Promotes understanding of decision contexts and processes, interactions amongst participants	Some decision makers and agencies may be uncomfortable being observed; participants are not as forthcoming with information  May not be able to ask questions and/or obtain the information for which you are looking
<b>Ongoing regional presence/ engagement</b>	Improves effectiveness of outreach efforts Builds trust with decision making community	Time consuming

# Co-Production of Research

Method	Pros	Con
<b>Co-production of research design and analysis</b>	<b>Obtain buy-in from decision makers from the start and throughout the research project</b>  <b>Improves decision maker's knowledge of science and the chances of his/her adoption of new information</b>	<b>Decision makers do not always have the time, resources and commitment needed to co-produce knowledge with scientists</b>  <b>Can lead to stakeholder fatigue</b>  <b>Desire of decision makers to use best and worst case scenarios can lead to unlikely projections</b>

# Thank you

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## Questions ?

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## Acknowledgements

