**2011 EEN Forum Notes**

**Session Name**: The EEN Morning Show – Complexity Personified

**Speakers:**  Steve Adams – Climate Leadership Initiative; Resource Innovation Group

Margaret Davidson, NOA

Emily Cloyd, National Climate Assessment

Jerry Filban – EPA, Office of Policy

Andrew Fahlund – American Rivers

**Session Date/Time**: 6/24/2011, 9:30 AM

**Note Taker**: Jake Lyonfields

**Main Themes**:

* Dynamic Evaluation
* Intergovernmental Cooperation
* Public Perspectives on Evaluation
* Climate Change Adaptation Strategies

**Detailed Notes**:

* Steve: We’ve seen rapid climate change adaptation development. Why is that?
* Margaret: Cities, counties and states are taking note of the risk of climate change; ie shellfish on the west coast, no barnacles on boats in West coast. Bipartisan support in these areas. Lots of incredible natural disasters: Floods, fires (record-breaking)
* Steve: Jerry, states are implementing the CEQ guidance. What challenges does EPA face in implementing the CEQ guidance?
* Jerry: We’re trying to set up good strategic planning so implementation is good at the local level, and our goals/outcomes don’t become easily obsolete. Over the next 5 years, the agency will issue 5 major rules regarding climate change adaptation, will have 5 new financial rules regarding climate change adaptation. Necessary to promote collaboration on the state level to implement guidelines
* Steve: Margaret, what do you see happening across NOA now?
* Margaret: NOA is responding to the requirements of the directives to federal agencies. Looking to making all facilities more climate-ready. Trying to develop grant requirements that require incorporation of climate change adaptation. Issued guidelines for fisheries and the undertaking of coastal and marine habitat restoration. NOA is orienting its science and outreach toward this issue. We’re recognizing the need to adapt our strategy based on location, a location’s current strategy, etc. Programs don’t necessarily have to have the word “climate” in them, though we want those programs to promote steering toward that goal.
* Steve: What does good adaptation look like, Andrew?
* Andrew: Adapting successfully can be a function of volatility and uncertainty. The best adaptation is really to stop doing bad things for the climate. A lot of the historical methods for adapting won’t really work in our future situations. Need to take into account ideas like flexibility, scalability, redundancy, etc as well.
* Steve: What products do we use for assessment?
* Emily: Projections of future climate change, needs for the future. Developing indicators of climate change, both in ecosystems and more directly, human systems. Want to create a sustained, institutionalized practice that can be released regularly. Currently putting on workshops, etc to understand the methodologies better.
* Steve: Margaret, in your estimation, how important is the issue of intergovernmental organization and cooperation?
* Margaret: Very important. We need to work across governments and sectors. In a lot of ways, state and local governments are driving the federal government. Even the Chamber of Commerce is doing some stuff. Federal agencies need to do a better job of synchronizing and educating and working together. Currently looking at how we define success with regard to climate change adaptation movements/policies. Most importantly, need to focus on infusing a greater sense of community involvement.
* Steve: Andrew, in light of what Margaret said, what are the specific recommendations for Climate Change Adaptation?
* Andrew: Report released: “Weathering Change”. Greatest points we need to focus on in order to be successful with regard to doing climate change adaptation well. Some policies are bad, and we need to get rid of them, but we’ve focused on what changes really need to take place within some key federal policies. For example, lots of elements of the National Flood Insurance program could change to respond more to climate change effects – we’ve really got a backward system in a lot of ways. A lot of our infrastructure was built on the premises of the past, and don’t take into account climate change effects, and so we need to address this.
* Jerry: Currently a lot of uncertainty of what we’re going to do on the local level, and so EPA has to use tools like evaluation in order to develop plans moving forward. Moreover, federal statutory authority only goes so far in directing how land can be used, so EPA has to work with local governments/communities. We need to look at current successful community practices in order to inform ourselves of what possible best practices are for climate change adaptation. We’re going to have to proceed cautiously in order to help states, tribes, and communities move forward well.
* Steve: National Climate Assessment soliciting input from sources like this in developing recommendations?
* Emily: A lot of change is taking place on the state and local level, so one of the things we’re doing is being open to input from a lot of individuals in order to better assess best options. For example, taking data and white papers from states and local governments to incorporate into the National Climate Assessment. We’d like to put in place a database that allows individuals to access all of these resources
* Margaret: Most of our environmental legislation was predicated on the concept that we existed within certain boundary conditions, and that any variability was small. We now know this isn’t true, and this has made modeling more complicated. Our environmental laws are more than 40 years old now. We need a more dynamic, iterative learning process both in our agencies and in our legislation. However, at the end of the day, we need to realize things like planning and zoning are local issues.
* Andrew: In the short run, we may be taking a few steps backward because of the gridlock in DC. On the part of deniers, adaptation being bad may come back to bite them. Deniers will see the world as black and white, but we as assessors know that’s not the way the world works. We need to identify those situations in which people are close to having to act on an issue, and then we need to steer them in the right direction.
* Jerry: The role of the evaluator is to strengthen the foundations of an organization. We need to advocate for iterative, evidence based learning.

**Points for Discussion**:

1. Consumption, Climate, and Population – how long do we have to wait for action?

* Margaret: Wildfires, drought, coastal inundation – things are happening, and people realize it, however, people also don’t want to realize something is happening.
* Andrew: Be prepared for the next catastrophe, however, use those catastrophes for better planning and action.

1. If we have to avoid the “C-word”, what should our goals mean/look like? Maybe the strategy is not to use certain language

* Margaret: We shouldn’t be so rigid in our orthodoxy that we fail to achieve our goal because we feel obligated to approach something in a specific manner
* Jerry: Utter blasphemy wherever we go – often times, climate disasters are localized. Things like food and water will bring it home; we need to make sure we elect officials that will utter blasphemy as well.
* Andrew: Example: Former Representative Bob Ingle – SC; he’s approaching climate ideas from a property perspective: we ought not do things with our property that will impinge on others’ property. Important to realize different approaches and mechanisms to move climate legislation forward

1. What are the challenges around managing individuals’ expectations with using evaluation?

* Margaret: We need to have a dynamic evaluation process and set of outcomes/goals. We need to realize that metrics may change over time, even though people don’t expect they will