

ANNUAL REPORT 2023



GEOS
INSTITUTE

Dear Friends,

What a year! 2023 saw our work take root in communities across four states in the southeast as a network of navigators fanned out to help some of the most at-risk communities in the country address climate change. As I write this message, our navigators are busy helping these communities create action plans, develop projects, and write grant proposals to make them a reality. We also began planning for the Georgia Climate Innovation Center – the first in the nation.

But this is just the beginning for Climate Ready America. Our small but mighty team is working hard to expand navigators and Climate Innovation Centers nationwide working with our state, territory, and Tribal partners.

Those efforts are well-received. Exciting new potential partnerships are emerging at the scale needed to address the crisis and we have great expectations for needle moving accomplishments. We hope you enjoy reading about the progress we have achieved together in 2023 – and what is underway in 2024!

Tonya Graham

About the Geos Institute

The Geos Institute aims to create a world with climate resilient communities, flourishing ecosystems, and equitable societies. We focus on helping local governments take action in communities that need it the most by ensuring they have access to the tools, information, and resources they need.

- **Climate Ready America®** is our flagship initiative to build a nationwide system of climate services so all communities can get the help they need to address the causes and impacts of the climate crisis regardless of their location, size, or wealth.
- **Climate Ready Communities®** helps local leaders in small, mid-sized, and under-resourced communities develop nature-based and socially equitable climate resilience strategies.
- **ClimateWise®** provides climate resilience consulting services to communities.
- **Drinking Water Providers Partnership** supports municipal water managers in the Pacific Northwest in preparing for a changing climate.

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CLIMATE READY AMERICA®

Local leaders across the United States are facing accelerating climate impacts that threaten their communities and the natural systems on which they depend. Increasingly, these leaders want to take effective action, but face an overwhelming array of federal and state programs, offers of support, and conflicting information.

Climate Ready America supports these local leaders by making it easier for them to find and take advantage of the resources they need to address the climate crisis. It is an innovative, adaptable, and responsive system, with decisions made as close to the ground as possible to help communities move quickly from thinking about taking action to taking effective action.



CLIMATE READY AMERICA®

Southeast Demonstration Project

Working with state, academic, nonprofit partners across North Carolina, South Carolina, Florida, and Georgia, we launched a demonstration project deploying Navigators to help communities that have received Community Disaster Resilience Zone (CDRZ) designations by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). Communities receive CDRZ designations when they have high climate risk and high social vulnerability, which means that while they are under extreme risk from disasters, they have very few resources to be proactive and build resilience.

Navigators help community leaders identify their climate goals and implement effective actions to protect their communities and reduce their greenhouse gas emissions. With our partners in almost every state and territory, we are working to have a nationwide Navigator Network serving all CDRZ communities as the first step toward a fully realized Climate Ready America.



CLIMATE READY AMERICA®

First Climate Innovation Center

With our in-state partners, we officially began planning for the Georgia Climate Innovation Center – the first in the nation. The plan is expected to be complete and the Center ready to launch by the end of 2024. This process will allow our other pilots in Utah, Washington, Indiana, and New Hampshire to follow quickly behind Georgia.

Climate Smart Communities Initiative

Geos Institute began leveraging its community-based resilience expertise as a member of the team operating the Climate Smart Communities Initiative (CSCI) – a program initiated by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) to help at least 80 communities build climate resilience over four years. The first communities will be selected for the program and underway with their climate resilience work in 2024.



CLIMATE READY COMMUNITIES®

Climate Resilience Strategies Database

In 2023 we continued to serve on the National Advisory Team for a Tribal Resilience Action Database. This effort is focused on providing strategies developed by and for Tribes. We continued to seek partnerships and opportunities for expanding the larger Climate Resilience Strategies Database started with our partners several years ago.

State Level Cohorts

Climate Ready Communities supported its first cohort of communities in moving through our *Practical Guide to Building Climate Resilience*. Eight communities in Indiana assessed their climate vulnerabilities and six developed climate resilience plans. Providing technical support for these communities in partnership with the Environmental Resilience Initiative at Indiana University has helped us refine the process and support materials to better support future cohorts.



CLIMATE WISE®

For the past 15 years, our ClimateWise program has provided direct assistance to communities by leading them through a full climate resilience planning process. As we focus more on building the Climate Ready America climate services system, we are focusing less on helping client communities through our consultant model. As a result, our work assisting the City of Sandy, Oregon will be the last ClimateWise project for the foreseeable future. We are taking all that we have learned from working directly with communities and using it to inform our other initiatives.



DRINKING WATER PROVIDERS PARTNERSHIP

2023 was the eighth year of grantmaking with the Drinking Water Providers Partnership, with increased funding due to the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. These grants support projects that use watershed restoration and conservation to protect drinking water and native fish habitat. The 12 projects recommended for funding in 2023 represent a variety of restoration approaches in diverse landscapes across Washington and Oregon.



Project Highlight

Vesper Meadow Restoration Preserve and a diverse network of partners implemented the second phase of restoration of Latgawa Creek by installing over 30 structures to capture sediment, slow flow, and reconnect the floodplain.

This restoration work addresses drinking water quality concerns upstream of Medford Water Commission's intake and supports reestablishing first foods, medicines, and culturally important materials.



Geos Institute co-founded the Drinking Water Providers Partnership with the Forest Service, and it has since grown to include the Environmental Protection Agency, Bureau of Land Management, Oregon Department of Environmental Quality, Washington Department of Health, The Freshwater Trust, and Wild Earth Guardians.

GEOS INSTITUTE

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