



JISC, Legal Aid Will Join Forces to Mitigate Crises

Low-income communities are disproportionately impacted from disasters, and the March, 2019 disaster in Nebraska was no different, leading to widespread damage to low-income housing, infrastructure, and supportive environments. The COVID-19 pandemic, with its loss of jobs and access to housing and food, has exacerbated the crisis.

Legal Aid of Nebraska (LAN) is prioritizing legal services for disaster-affected low-income families and communities, including in urban, rural, and tribal areas, to attain greater education, long-term recovery, and resilience so they are better prepared and protected when the next disaster strikes.

Working with the Joslyn Institute for Sustainable Communities (JISC), LAN training and workshops designed to help civic and other community leadership to understand and explore solutions to environmental challenges associated with natural disasters and other impacts from ongoing changes to climate.

Through this program, JISC will facilitate and conduct a training and educational program for Legal Aid staff involved in its disaster relief planning, legal services, and advocacy. The program will focus on providing a greater understanding of the concepts of sustainability, “sustainable development,” resiliency, and social and environmental barriers to, among other related issues, the efficient resource use, environmental quality, and health of communities in Nebraska.

This training and education will assist Legal Aid staff in identifying and advocating for long-term solutions on behalf of Legal Aid’s low-income clients and communities. This training and education program



will identify and incorporate equity principles involved in all decisions associated with long-term recovery and resiliency, and how advocating for the use of these principles can enhance the vitality and sustainability of both low-income communities and their larger communities as well.

Through the workshops, participants will explore the impacts of poverty on ability to address impacts of disasters; barriers people in poverty face to overcome the impacts of disasters; why disasters and their impacts implicate and require examination of resiliency and long-term recovery.

Using Sustainometrics®, JISC’s proprietary methodology for sustainability metrics, concepts such as sustainable development, resiliency, and the importance of equity and its involvement in all considerations, decisions, advocacy, and policy activity will be explored.

The series of workshops will begin this week.

Nexus Between Climate Change/Pandemic/Biodiversity is Both National Security Threat and Unique Opportunity

“Climate change has huge national security implications,” warns Gen. James Clapper, former Director of National Intelligence and Director of the Defense Intelligence Agency. “One of the offshoots of climate change is disease and pandemics.” The intersection of disease and climate change, he notes, has been able to bring the world’s most powerful nation to its knees. “All those tanks, planes and ships haven’t done much good against this disease, have they?” he says in a recent Deep State Radio podcast. “It was not another nation state that killed so many tens of thousands of our citizens, nor undermined our economy.” The COVID-19 pandemic should make us “rethink the whole concept of ‘threat’.” Spending money as we have, the way we’ve invested billions upon billions in sophisticated weapons systems, we have to ask if that’s serving our national security interests optimally.”

Clapper’s warning echoes decades of research, strategy, white papers, and more. A landmark 2010 study in *Nature* of the impacts of biodiversity on the emergence and transmission of infectious diseases noted that the current “unprecedented declines in biodiversity” through climate change, land use changes, deforestation, agricultural intensification, increased travel and global commerce are among the biggest drivers of zoonotic infectious diseases in humans. This study followed a 2009 National Institutes of Health report on the impact of climate change on pandemic influenza risk.

And the Pentagon’s *Quadrennial Defense Review* in 2014 noted that climate change is now recognized by defense planners as a “threat multiplier” and an “accelerant



of instability” because of how it influences a range of other already existing threats: food shortages, medical and public health readiness, conflicts over resources in unbalanced human migration patterns, and the increased transmission of zoonotic infectious diseases (those spread by animals) and vector-borne diseases (those spread by insects).

So we were warned. And while we’re still trying to understand the multifarious impacts of the climate change/loss of biodiversity/pandemic nexus, we must urgently consider the possible impacts of choices we are making today. A *Carbon Brief* report said, “Future pandemics are likely to happen more frequently, spread more rapidly, have greater economic impact and kill more people if we are not extremely careful about the choices we make today.”

Last week Christine Lagarde, president of the European Central Bank, said she and her colleagues are working to counteract some of the economic devastation, especially among the most vulnerable “who are hardest hit by this pandemic”.

“This pandemic is offering us the opportunity for re-examination of the structures we’ve become accustomed to,” she told the *Financial Times*. “Perhaps this current crisis will transform our perception of

globalism, of human proximity, of global supply chains, and control over our own destiny.

“The impetus and momentum are strong now to make fundamental changes. Everything is on the table,” Lagarde said. She noted that, besides targeting vulnerable populations, the proposed 2,8 trillion Euro relief package will prioritize disposing of corporate bonds of carbon-intensive companies and favor the bonds of green companies.

A small but positive step, to be sure. But the way this pandemic has leveled so many of our precepts and traditional ways of seeing things, may indeed provide a large window of opportunity to envision and move with more resolve toward a sustainable future.

Some related articles on the intersection of biodiversity, infectious disease and climate change: <https://www.propublica.org/article/climate-infectious-diseases> <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7122279/> <https://www.carbonbrief.org/q-and-a-could-climate-change-and-biodiversity-loss-raise-the-risk-of-pandemics> <https://www.nature.com/articles/nature09575> <https://phys.org/news/2019-05-biodiversity-loss-political-left.html> <https://www.cnn.com/2010/WORLD/asiapcf/10/17/biodiversity.un.summit.briefing/index.html>

For a wide-ranging, positive path forward, read this important book: [The New Grand Strategy: Restoring America’s Prosperity, Security, and Sustainability in the 21st Century](#)

Center for Rural Affairs Compiles Resources for Rural People and Businesses

COVID-19 and the ripple effects will create new challenges for rural people and rural places. The Center for Rural Affairs is committed to continuing their work for opportunity and justice for everyone in rural America during the rapidly evolving response to the coronavirus. You can find a comprehensive directory of resources here:

<https://www.cfra.org/RuralDisasterResources>



Greener Towns Plant Grants from Statewide Arboretum

Need a few hundred flowers to fill your park, library or other public landscape—FAST? You pick the day, the Nebraska Statewide Arboretum brings the plants, thanks to funding from the Nebraska Environmental Trust. If you are planning a fall planting in a community space be sure to check out the Greener Towns Plant Grant and apply to receive native herbaceous perennials at half the cost. Sign-up for September planting ends July 31.

<https://plantnebraska.org/community-landscapes/project-funding/greener-towns-minigrants.html>

Contact Your Legislator to Support LB 283

Nebraska is one of a minority of states without a state climate plan. A bill that would push the state to prepare for climate change and create a plan to deal with the local impact of more extreme weather is awaiting action in the Unicameral. Sen. Patty Pansing Brooks is responsible for introducing LB283, the goal of which is to assess the current impact of climate change on Nebraska and come up with a strategy for combatting crises arising from climate change and building resilience in the future.

Scottsbluff Area Farmers Markets Feature Variety

The Scottsbluff Farmers Market features fresh farm produce throughout the week and throughout towns and locations in the Scottsbluff area. The schedule is:

Mondays at Gering
Tuesdays in Morrill and Henry
Thursdays in Mitchell and Henry
Saturdays with in Scottsbluff and Saturday afternoons in Morrill and Henry. For more information, contact scottsblufffarmersmarket@gmail.com or visit their Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/ScottsbluffFarmersMarket/>

