



## **Witnessing Change Video Competition**

The *Witnessing Change Video Competition* is a unique grassroots documentary and investigative reporting project on current climate related impacts already affecting American communities. The project asks students to explore the personal costs of climate disruption by interviewing impacted individuals and creating two-minute videos. In the process, they create local dialogues and shareable social media to improve public literacy around immediate consequences of climate change.

Students will be awarded cash prizes of \$500 and \$250 for first and second place. Top videos may be publicized by the Climate Cost Project and partnering organizations, through both traditional and new media platforms. Students may produce their videos individually or in teams, and are encouraged to work across disciplines (e.g. environmental studies, journalism, documentary production). There are two separate competitions for high school and college.

For teachers who want to make the video project a class assignment, the Climate Cost Project provides interdisciplinary classroom materials, including an interactive game, in order to give their students the necessary background to understand the goals of the project. These materials can be found on the [Climate Cost Project's website](#). However, it is not necessary to undergo the project as a part of a class. Students who already have sufficient background knowledge and skills to complete the project may undertake the project individually. In order to make a better assessment of the knowledge and skills that will be required please look at the guidelines further down in this document.

The Climate Cost Project was launched last year in Hurricane Sandy affected areas of New Jersey. 2016/2017 will be the inaugural year for the national launch of the Climate Cost Project and *Witnessing Change Video Competition*. Submissions are due May 1, 2017.

## **The Importance of Witnessing Climate Change**

We know that climate change is currently harming American communities. Storms such as those that recently struck Louisiana and the southeastern United States have forced millions of people from their homes, causing

significant personal and economic losses. This kind flooding is more likely to happen because of climate change<sup>1</sup> and, in fact, the Louisiana flooding was one of five 1000-year flooding events that occurred in under a year's time.<sup>2</sup> Further, we know that across the country people are increasingly suffering from other climate-related impacts, such as vector borne diseases like Lyme disease and West Nile virus. The spread of vector-borne disease is considered by the U.S. EPA to be an indicator of climate change.<sup>3</sup>

Despite these compelling signs, a recent analysis found that broadcast news coverage of climate change decreased by five percent in 2015 over the prior year, even as 2015 eclipsed 2014 as the hottest year on record.<sup>4,5</sup> At the same time, Americans' concerns about climate change are low relative to the severity of current impacts. A majority think climate change is important, but less than 25% think it is very serious,<sup>6</sup> and only 41% think that climate change is already harming people in the United States.<sup>7</sup> Sixty-one percent of Americans have little or no idea how climate change is affecting their own health and the health of their families.<sup>8</sup>

Students taking part in the *Witnessing Change Video Competition* will fill a much-needed role by documenting the personal and financial costs of climate change at a grassroots level, with stories sourced, produced, and told by communities themselves. By providing a platform for Americans to connect what they are experiencing to climate change, the Project aims to foster a common identity among affected people and create a personal way for them to engage in implementing solutions. In the process of making and sharing the documentaries, the students will also raise awareness of the impacts of climate change, both in their communities and the country.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.climatecentral.org/analyses/louisiana-downpours-august-2016/>

<sup>2</sup> [http://blogs.edf.org/climate411/2016/09/06/we-just-had-five-1000-year-floods-in-less-than-a-year-whats-going-on/?\\_ga=1.11325757.849592309.1450129287](http://blogs.edf.org/climate411/2016/09/06/we-just-had-five-1000-year-floods-in-less-than-a-year-whats-going-on/?_ga=1.11325757.849592309.1450129287)

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.epa.gov/climate-indicators/downloads-indicators-report>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.scribd.com/doc/302896750/Media-Matters-Climate-Broadcast-Study>

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.nasa.gov/press-release/nasa-noaa-analyses-reveal-record-shattering-global-warm-temperatures-in-2015>

<sup>6</sup> [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/americans-largely-unconcerned-about-climate-change-survey-finds\\_us\\_563906d8e4b079a43c04de2d](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/americans-largely-unconcerned-about-climate-change-survey-finds_us_563906d8e4b079a43c04de2d)

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/04/18/what-the-world-thinks-about-climate-change-in-7-charts/>

<sup>8</sup> <http://climatecommunication.yale.edu/publications/do-americans-understand-that-global-warming-is-harmful-to-human-health/>

## ***2016-2017 Witnessing Change Video Competitions***

For the 2016/17 high school and college competitions, the Climate Cost Project is seeking short videos documenting personal stories of climate change damages. The videos should highlight the emotional and financial costs of climate change to the individual. This year, we are inviting documentaries related to extreme flooding, drought, fire, and climate-aggravated vector borne illness such as West Nile Virus and Lyme disease. There is also an additional 'open' category, for which students must seek pre-approval.

We have chosen these impacts because they create significant personal costs to individuals. However, we acknowledge they are not comprehensive, and that there may be other costly climate impacts. Therefore, we have an additional 'open' category, in which students may seek pre-approval to do a video on a climate impact that is not specifically listed above.

Entrants wishing to apply to the open category should write a short letter to the project (not to exceed half a page) detailing the climate impact they would like to cover, where the impact occurred (or is occurring), why it is related to climate change, and the personal costs it has created for their interviewees.

## **Video Competition Requirements and Guidelines**

### **Requirements**

All videos must follow the requirements. Any videos that fail to follow them will be disqualified from the competition.

- Video length should not exceed 2 minutes, excluding credits and references.
- Videos should not exceed 200 MB in size and should be submitted in MP4 format.
- Background music should be instrumental only, and must either be appropriately licensed or available in the public domain. Where open access licenses require giving credit to the artist, these should be provided in the production references at the end of the film.
- Sound in the video must be high quality. Microphones should be used for interviews if there is any background noise while recording, as well as for recording telephone conversations. Where possible, recordings should take place in an environment where background noise is minimal or absent altogether.

- Videos must contain some original footage and/or photography. In-person interviews with affected individuals will qualify as original footage. However, videos that also contain original footage/photography of climate impacts will likely receive higher consideration. All footage that is not original should be available in the public domain (e.g. government photos, or materials with a creative commons license, and given credit in production references where required). Students using non-governmental organization and news outlet sources must have these organizations' permission to use their materials.
- Signed media release forms will be required for all persons who appear in the video, either visually or through audio, including personal photographs of individuals that are not in the public domain. If the person in the video is under 18 years of age, a parent must also sign the release form. Students producing the videos must also sign this form.
- If an interviewee provides medical information, a HIPPA (Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act) release form will be required. If the interviewee is under 18 years of age, a parent must also sign the release form.
- All required forms must be completed, signed, and submitted along with the video. The forms will be available on the CCP website.

## **Guidelines**

Videos should focus around an individual or family who has been financially affected by extreme flooding, drought, fire, or climate-aggravated vector borne illnesses.

In interviewing impacted people, it is appropriate to reach out to local experts on infrastructure, ecology, public health, medical professionals, etc. and/or provide student-generated (or researched) graphs and analysis to show the impacts of climate change in the region. Graphics, photos, and footage from government sources also provide excellent material to complement interviews.

### ***Specific guidelines***

#### **I. Science elements**

Stories of impacts experienced by participants must be explicitly linked to climate change. For example, if the documentary is focusing on a farmer whose fields have been damaged by drought, the video must make clear how climate change is exacerbating drought. If appropriate, it should also

address the challenges that the region or community is facing from that climate change impact outside of what the individual interviewed is experiencing personally. Videos that do not contextualize the impact in terms of climate change will be disqualified.

The contextualization should demonstrate a reasonable understanding of climate science, the difference between climate and weather, and the effect of climate change as a threat multiplier. Videos should also touch upon expectations for future trajectories of climate change in the affected area.

## **II. Economic elements**

Strong videos will show participants discussing some of the economic costs they have experienced as a result of their hardship. Costs not covered by insurance companies or other institutions are particularly important, because many of these are undocumented.

Individuals may have been financially affected because their homes or businesses were damaged or destroyed by flooding, drought, or fire, or because illness caused them to miss work or seek expensive medical treatments. Financial losses from illnesses might also be indirect; for example, illness may result in missing school or other professional development opportunities.

## **III. Solutions**

Videos must discuss possible solutions to improve resilience or mitigate carbon emissions. The solutions can be either global or local, and students can focus on areas of solutions that are most compelling to them personally. Examples of different types of solutions might be instituting carbon pricing, public policies promoting renewable energy, organizing for political action, local initiatives to bring clean energy to the community, or local efforts for resilience planning.

## **IV. Overall Presentation**

- Videos should tell a compelling story about the experiences of the person and community affected by climate change.
- Different elements of the documentary—science, economics, personal stories—should be skillfully and creatively integrated in a way that makes the video interesting and engaging.

- Overall production and editing quality of the video should be high. Video footage should be of high quality and skillfully edited using appropriate video production software.

### ***Submission process, deadlines, judging, and prizes***

The competition will award cash prizes of \$500 and \$250 for first and second place winners in both the high school and college competitions. As discussed above, students' work may be publicized by the Climate Cost Project and partnering organizations, through both traditional and new media platforms. Teachers and schools of students selected for prizes will be given a recognition award by the Climate Cost Project.

There are no submission fees for video entries.

***The contest submission deadline is 11:59 p.m., May 1st, 2017.*** A link for submission will be open on the website on April 15, 2017. Winners will be announced May 31, 2017.

Judges with expertise in climate change and video production will review and evaluate the videos based on the elements laid out under these guidelines. High school and college student submissions will be judged separately.