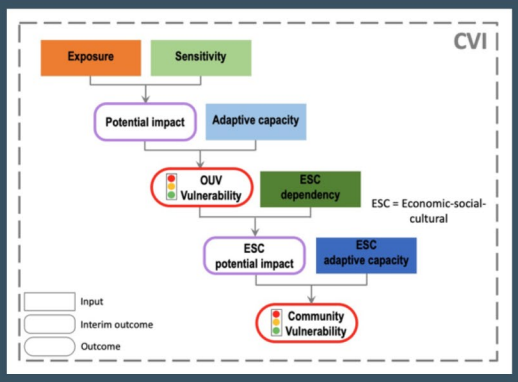
California Heritage Climate Vulnerability Assessment Tool

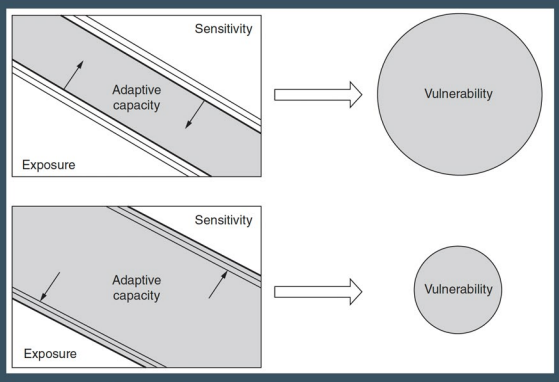
Big Basin State Park historic lodge after the 2020 fires.
Photo by California State Park

Issues and Opportunities

Climate change poses an increasing threat to cultural heritage at a global scale. The loss of heritage can exacerbate social vulnerability as communities lose their grounding and material connection to the past. The scale of the climate impact to heritage can seem untenable such that even defining effective action may be overwhelming. The goal of this project is to evaluate and synthetize the existing vulnerability assessments, to identify the particular needs of California and to develop a protocol to begin measuring the vulnerability of local heritage to climate impacts with the goal of identifying a set of potential actions for mitigation. One of the long-term objectives of this initial effort is to empower communities to participate in solutions to steward their heritage into the future.



Workflow for the Cultural Vulnerability Index (CVI) tool developed for UNESCO World Heritage Sites (https://cvi-heritage.org/about).



Vulnerability is a function of exposure, sensitivity, and adaptive capacity.

Climate Vulnerability Assessment

Vulnerability is a measure of the relationship between exposure, sensitivity and adaptive capacity. As these variables expand or contract, vulnerability is higher or lower. This project aims to measure the vulnerability of cultural heritage to climate change impacts. This requires 1) the identification of the significance of cultural heritage, 2) the identification of climate impacts and 3) the measurement of the exposure, sensitivity, and adaptive capacity of the analyzed resource. The assessment of these three components produces a vulnerability index. Building upon frameworks other scholars have developed, the project will consider the spirit of Outstanding Universal Values used for World Heritage Sites, the criteria for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places, and significance from community participants to create a new value set for measuring cultural heritage in vulnerability indexes. By partnering with adjacent community and tribal stakeholders we aim to learn how to prioritize local community and tribal knowledge to measure and categorize site significance and value and incorporate these voices into the assessment of heritage vulnerability to climate impacts.

		Product	January – February '21	March – May '21	May – Jun '21
1	Discuss OUV and NRHP	- Initial Report - First Stakeholder meeting			
	Discuss Steps Forward				
	Select study site				
	Organize data				
2	Design structure of workshop	- Workshop - Progress Report			
	Day 1 – Initial workshop				
	Day 2 – CVI Assessment				
	Day 3 – Feedback and Report				
3	Suggest next steps	- Final report			

Timeline for Stakeholders - Collaborators

The time of our collaborators is highly respected and valued. Partners are invited to join in this research for the three to four collaborator meetings between February and June 2021. There will also be regular email exchanges in between and after meetings. Data confidentiality and sharing will be among the topics discussed at the first meeting.

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