

*Priority Actions for 2009***Climate Change Strategic Plan**

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has drafted a Climate Change Strategic Plan that establishes a vision and direction for the agency's future response to accelerated climate change. But we are acting now to lay the foundation for this strategy.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is now seeking ideas and suggestions from the public and partners in order to refine and improve the agency's draft Strategic Plan before finalizing it later this year. However, the Service recognized the need and opportunity to take immediate action *this fiscal year*. During FY2009, the Service has taken key first steps to prepare for ambitious efforts to help wildlife adapt to accelerating climate change in 2010 and beyond. These FY09 actions anticipate and support the Service's Strategic Plan, which in turn reflects the larger strategy of the Department of the Interior. The actions were approved by Service leadership in November 2008 and have already begun to be implemented across the nation.

Current actions build on the Service's commitment to implement partnership-driven, results-oriented landscape conservation to address the unprecedented challenges posed by accelerating climate change. Full details of the Service's FY09 actions can be found at: <http://www.fws.gov/home/climatechange/>.

The Service is focusing on the following priority areas:

Identifying, prioritizing, and adjusting Service activities to consider the effects of climate change.

The Service has begun reviewing all aspects of its work in order to identify areas where anticipated climate change impacts can and should inform Service and state wildlife agency planning and implementation activities.



Choctaw National Wildlife Refuge by J and K Hollingsworth

Developing a national fish and wildlife adaptation strategy and inventory and monitoring program.

The Service is working with federal and state agencies, conservation organizations and other partners to address accelerated climate change more effectively by ensuring actions are coordinated across landscapes and political boundaries. Work has begun to explore alternatives for a national inventory and monitoring program that will provide data for a long-term understanding of the effects of changing climate on fish and wildlife, and to support the development of a national adaptation strategy that will provide a shared "blueprint" to guide wildlife adaptation partnerships over the coming decades.

Building regional and field technical capacity for climate change adaptation

Working with our partners, the Service will create and enhance field-level capacity to provide cutting edge science and information that will help land and wildlife managers make decisions related to changing climate. This capacity will be housed in regionally based partnerships called Landscape Conservation Cooperatives (LCCs), which will provide landscape-scale biological planning and conservation design.



Building climate change leadership and management capacities

Over the next two to three years, policy and political decisions of enormous consequence will be made at national, regional, and state levels. The Service has begun to build capacity to help shape and respond to these decisions, while capitalizing on the talents of its employees, by establishing several key professional positions and a National Climate Change Team and regional climate teams.

Identifying priority water needs

The Service is working to identify and assess priority issues related to changes in water quality and quantity, reflecting the best available climate change modeling and anticipating impacts to fish and wildlife species and habitats.

Addressing habitat fragmentation

The Service is working to provide recommendations and assess progress toward promoting habitat connectivity to support species population objectives. As habitats alter and species' ranges shift as a result of climate change, habitat corridors will become crucial to species' migration and ultimate survival.

Facilitating international leadership on climate change and wildlife

The Service has begun to develop a strategy for engaging key countries in a partnership to share and acquire knowledge of climate change adaptation, mitigation and public engagement strategies; facilitate an international exchange of personnel; and identify ways to engage the Service more effectively in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and other appropriate international forums.

Educating and communicating

Working closely with partners and stakeholders, the Service is working on a strategy to engage the American public regarding the significance of climate change for fish and wildlife. The Service will also pursue an aggressive internal and external communications effort designed to support its climate change and landscape conservation work with employees, partners and others.

Reducing the Service's carbon footprint

Across the agency, Service employees have begun documenting the Service's carbon footprint and instituting practices to avoid greenhouse gas emissions, minimize unavoidable emissions and offset remaining emissions.

Expanding biological carbon sequestration to create habitat for wildlife

The Service is working with conservation partners to expand biological carbon sequestration techniques, restore habitat, and conserve wildlife. We will use landscape conservation planning approaches to determine where, when, how much, and what habitat types should be conserved to achieve population, habitat, and carbon sequestration objectives.

Reviewing legal, regulatory and policy issues

The Service response to climate change must consider necessary and appropriate changes to the legal, regulatory, and policy frameworks within which we operate. The Service has begun to coordinate a review of these frameworks to identify necessary and recommended changes in the legal, regulatory or policy framework that will encourage and support effective responses to climate change.

Assessing species vulnerability to guide conservation

Vulnerability assessments will help identify the species and landscapes at greatest risk from accelerated climate change, and therefore constitute a crucial initial investment in developing an adaptation plan for species. The Service has begun to develop and test climate change risk and vulnerability assessment methodologies for fish and wildlife species.

Considering climate change in grant criteria

Service programs that administer grant programs are working to review existing policies and develop new grant evaluation criteria, where appropriate, in order to more effectively direct funding to projects that specifically address or anticipate climate change.



Humboldt Bay National Wildlife Refuge by Tupper Ansel Blake



Arapaho National Wildlife Refuge by Virginia Heitman

Assisting in shaping energy policy

Solutions to global warming are likely to focus on clean energy development. The Service has begun working through the Department of the Interior to exercise its responsibility as a stakeholder in America's energy future and help shape energy policy that considers wildlife conservation and renewable energy development issues.

For more information or to comment on these proposed actions or the draft Strategic Plan, visit the Service's climate change Web site at <http://www.fws.gov/home/climatechange/>