

Memorandum

To: Assistant Secretaries
Heads of Bureaus and Offices

From: Deputy Secretary

Subject: Department of the Interior Climate Change Adaptation Plan – Action Needed

The purpose of this memorandum is to reiterate the Department of the Interior's commitment to climate change adaptation planning and to outline actions needed to develop a Department-wide climate change adaptation plan by June 4, 2012, that is consistent with the guiding principles and adaptation planning framework recommended in October, 2010, by the Council on Environmental Quality's (CEQ) Interagency Climate Adaptation Task Force and in accordance with Executive Order 13514, *Federal Leadership in Environmental, Energy and Economic Performance*.¹

Climate change adaptation planning is needed to address the effects of climate change that impact the Department's mission, programs, operations and assets, including our infrastructure and the land and water resources under our responsibility. Climate change adaptation is a critical complement to climate change mitigation. Climate change mitigation is an important undertaking that the Department is addressing in a number of ways including, in particular, through our support of renewable energy development on public lands.

Secretarial Order No. 3289, issued on September 14, 2009, and amended February 22, 2010, established the Department's first-ever coordinated strategy to address current and future impacts of climate change on our land, water, wildlife, cultural heritage, and tribal resources. The Order also created the Department's Energy and Climate Change Council, chaired by the Secretary, to provide overall leadership for these efforts, assisted by the Energy and Climate Change Task Force, co-chaired by the Deputy Secretary and Counselor to the Secretary. Acting through these mechanisms, the Department has initiated a number of actions to identify the areas and species ranges in the U.S. that are most vulnerable to climate change and to begin implementing comprehensive climate change adaptation strategies in these areas.

¹ See Progress Report of the Interagency Climate Change Adaptation Task Force: Recommended Actions in Support of a National Climate Change Adaptation Strategy (Oct. 5, 2010) and associated Implementing Instructions and Support Document (Mar. 4, 2011), *available at* <http://www.whitehouse.gov/administration/eop/ceq/initiatives/adaptation>.

Earlier this year, the Energy and Climate Change Task Force created the Climate Change Working Group, co-chaired by Ms. Gabriela Chavarria, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Advisor; Mr. Matt Larsen, USGS Associate Director for Climate and Land Use Change; and Ms. Elizabeth Klein, representing the Office of the Deputy Secretary, to assist in overseeing the Department's climate change adaptation planning efforts. This group will take responsibility for developing the Department's long-term climate change adaptation plan as well as interim actions identified in the Federal Agency Climate Change Adaptation Planning Implementing Instructions released earlier this year by the CEQ. These actions include providing to the CEQ, by September 30, 2011, a preliminary high-level analysis of agency vulnerability to climate change, with a final analysis due by March 2012. We anticipate that our efforts to meet the Department's Climate Change High Priority Performance Goal – identifying resources particularly vulnerable to climate change for half the nation by the end of 2012 and implementing adaptation actions in response – will inform this analysis. Requests for additional information and assistance from the bureaus will nevertheless be needed.

The Department's climate change adaptation plan is due to the CEQ and to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) by June 4, 2012, for implementation in Fiscal Year 2013. In addition to developing this plan and making it available for public comment, the Department will consolidate its climate change adaptation planning and mitigation policies into a new Departmental Manual chapter to guide current and future efforts. The Climate Change Working Group will develop a plan for accomplishing these goals with oversight from the Energy and Climate Change Council and Task Force.

There is little doubt that climate change will directly affect the Federal Government, the communities we serve, and the infrastructure, lands, and waters we manage and protect. The Department of the Interior, and each of its bureaus, has a responsibility to prepare for and respond to a changing climate so that our services, programs, and operations will continue to be effective. Thank you for continued support of this effort.