

# Climate Change and the USFWS Division of International Conservation

Climate change is a global phenomenon. Every human being affects and is affected by our planet's health. Effectively saving species at home depends upon effectively addressing climate change worldwide.

Predicting the effects of climate change on species and habitats is complex, yet there are several points on which a scientific consensus has emerged:

1. Climate change will alter:
  - a. The distribution of species and habitats;
  - b. Human resource use and population distribution;
  - c. Human-wildlife and livestock-wildlife interactions.
2. Infectious diseases (including zoonoses) are likely to emerge more frequently, and in new areas;
3. Human alteration of natural areas can exacerbate the causes and consequences of climate change for wild species;
4. The urgent need for climate change mitigation and adaptation measures will place additional burdens on natural habitats and the vital ecosystem services, carbon sinks and watersheds these habitats provide.
5. Developing nations are:
  - a. An essential and large part of the solution to climate change;
  - b. The least capable of mitigating climate change and adapting to climate change impacts.
6. Over 90% of present-day land use change emissions occur in South America, Asia and Africa.

The **goals** of the Wildlife Without Borders climate change program are:

- To modify human activities to slow the rate of climate change;
- To increase the opportunities for species, habitats and ecosystems to cope with climate change, and;
- To equip wildlife professionals and conservation practitioners with the skills and resources to respond to changing circumstances and to build their capacity to engage the global public regarding climate change issues.

The **objectives** of the Wildlife Without Borders program to address climate change are:

1. Conserve priority species and habitats across landscapes;
2. Maintain/restore ecosystem health, processes and resilience;
3. Identify and implement mitigation measures;
4. Inform and engage the global public about the causes and consequences of climate change, and the benefits of adopting mitigation measures.

**Strategies** to achieve goals and objectives:

Integrated Landscape Conservation: We will facilitate conservation on a landscape scale by strengthening or – where necessary – creating forums that promote dialog and cooperation among diverse groups such as governments, non-government organizations, scientists, resources managers, community leaders and decision-makers.

Resource Management Training: We will build the capacity of local institutions to train resource managers regarding climate change. Training will be interdisciplinary, emphasizing landscape conservation, watershed restoration and protection, connectivity and large-scale

wildlife needs, the use of corridors and networks of protected areas to facilitate migration and adaptation to climate-induced habitat changes, as well as the leadership role of conservation agencies in national carbon trading mechanisms and non-market enabling activities for mitigation and adaptation.

Local Training and Empowerment: Initiatives will be designed to enhance the ability of local institutions to educate decision-makers, community leaders, and other individuals who influence how society addresses climate change. This includes promoting the integration of climate change related activities with local conservation initiatives, and strengthening efforts to design and implement land use policies emphasizing climate change adaptation and mitigation.

International Treaty Implementation: We will seek to address climate change more effectively through Multilateral Environmental Agreements such as the U.N. Framework Convention on Climate Change, CITES, and Ramsar, these conventions' subsidiary bodies and species and habitat related activities, as well as other international forums and networks.

International Information Exchange: Accelerate the development of regional information exchanges, including distribution centers on management approaches to climate change through initiatives such as the Canada/Mexico/US Trilateral Committee for Wildlife and Ecosystem Conservation and Management (Trilateral) and the Western Hemisphere Migratory Species Initiative (WHMSI).

Habitat Restoration Initiatives: Support restoration of strategically selected habitats, with native plant species, to increase available habitat for wildlife adaptation and serve as new sinks for atmospheric carbon worldwide.