

**FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
CLIMATE CHANGE**

1.1 What is the purpose of this chapter? This chapter:

A. Establishes overall U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) policy and staff responsibilities on climate change adaptation, and

B. Steps down the Departmental policy on climate change adaptation (see 523 DM 1).

1.2 What is the scope of this chapter? This chapter applies to all programs, Regions, and other offices and organizational units of the Service.

1.3 What are the authorities for this chapter?

A. Executive Order 13514, Federal Leadership in Environmental, Energy, and Economic Performance.

B. Secretarial Order 3289 (and amendments), Addressing the Impacts of Climate Change on America's Water, Land, and Other Natural and Cultural Resources.

C. 523 DM 1, Climate Change Adaptation Policy.

1.4 How does the Service define climate change adaptation? Adaptation involves planned, science-based management actions, including regulatory and policy changes, that we take to reduce the negative impacts of climate change on fish, wildlife, and their habitats. It forms the core of our response to climate change. The scientific community defines climate change adaptation as an adjustment in natural or human systems in response to actual or expected climatic stimuli or their effects, which moderates harm or exploits beneficial opportunities.

1.5 Why is it important for the Service to consider climate change adaptation? Climate change is already affecting lands we manage; the fish, wildlife, and plant populations we are responsible for; and the ecosystems they rely on.

A. We must evaluate and address the impacts of climate change, incorporating climate change adaptation measures in our planning and decisionmaking so that we more effectively manage fish, wildlife, plants, and associated ecological processes to achieve our mission. In some cases, the answer may be to do nothing.

B. We must work to better understand the impacts of climate change on fish and wildlife—both positive and negative—through the application of sound science, in order to reduce harm and take advantage of potential beneficial opportunities from a changing climate.

1.6 What is the Service's overall policy for climate change adaptation? It is our policy to effectively and efficiently incorporate and implement climate change adaptation measures into the Service's mission, programs, and operations. Fully implementing and in accordance with Departmental policy (523 DM 1), we must:

A. Use the best available science to increase understanding of climate change impacts among all Service employees, to better inform decisionmakers, and to coordinate an appropriate adaptive response to impacts on:

(1) Lands and waters;

(2) Fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitats;

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(3) Cultural and tribal resources; and

(4) Other assets under our jurisdiction.

B. Integrate climate change adaptation strategies into all aspects of our policies, planning, programs, and operations, from facilities maintenance to public use of lands, and from habitat restoration and refuge management to endangered species recovery plans.

C. Work with partners to implement:

(1) The Service’s climate change strategic plan (*Rising to the Urgent Challenge: Strategic Plan for Responding to Accelerating Climate Change*);

(2) The *National Fish, Wildlife, and Plants Climate Adaptation Strategy*; and

(3) 523 DM 1.

D. Conduct and support research that will help us better monitor change and facilitate adaptation.

E. Work with Landscape Conservation Cooperatives (LCCs) to develop vulnerability assessments, decision support tools, biological plans, landscape conservation designs, and regional and local responses that advance conservation at broad, landscape scales in consideration of climate change and other stressors.

F. Deliver landscape conservation actions that build resilience or support the ability of fish, wildlife, and plants to adapt to climate change.

G. Monitor populations and habitats to assess the impacts of our management strategies in the face of climate change.

H. Implement and support carbon sequestration projects that protect and promote healthy fish, wildlife, and plant populations and habitats.

I. Engage Service employees and work with LCCs in collaborative conservation with the following groups to seek solutions to the impacts of climate change and other stressors on fish and wildlife:

(1) Our local, State, tribal, national, and international partners in the public and private sectors;

(2) Congressional Members and staff, other key constituencies, and stakeholders; and

(3) The general public.

1.7 Who in the Service is responsible for implementing the climate change adaptation policy? See Table 1-1.

Table 1 1: Responsibilities for Climate Change Adaptation Policy and Program	
These employees...	Are responsible for...
A. Director	<p>(1) Ensuring that the Service has a climate adaptation policy in place that is consistent with Departmental policy;</p> <p>(2) Establishing an internal Climate Adaptation Network for the Service (see</p>

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Table 1 1: Responsibilities for Climate Change Adaptation Policy and Program	
These employees...	Are responsible for...
	<p>523 DM 1);</p> <p>(3) Appointing employees with appropriate technical expertise to serve on the Department's and other agencies' climate change work groups and committees; and</p> <p>(4) Coordinating with other Departmental heads of bureaus and offices to ensure a cross-agency, integrated approach to implementing effective and efficient climate change adaptation measures.</p>
B. Science Advisor to the Director	<p>(1) Developing this and other policy and guidance on climate change adaptation and keeping it up-to-date;</p> <p>(2) Leading the Service's Climate Adaptation Network;</p> <p>(3) Leading and coordinating cross-program and cross-Regional input;</p> <p>(4) Working with the Directorate, other Service leadership, and the National Conservation Training Center (NCTC) to ensure managers and employees have the necessary scientific knowledge and training and are aware of the latest policies, strategies, and best practices for adaptation as they relate to climate change;</p> <p>(5) Assisting with requests from Regions and programs for specialized technical advice on climate change adaptation; and</p> <p>(6) Representing the Service in interagency climate adaptation efforts, including implementing the <i>National Fish, Wildlife, and Plants Climate Adaptation Strategy</i>.</p>
C. Directorate members	<p>(1) Ensuring that their Region/program staff comply with the Department's climate change adaptation policy (523 DM 1), this policy, the Service's climate change strategic plan, and the <i>National Fish, Wildlife, and Plants Climate Adaptation Strategy</i>;</p> <p>(2) Incorporating climate change adaptation strategies into existing planning processes (e.g., recovery plans, habitat conservation plans, Comprehensive Conservation Plans, habitat management plans, migratory bird plans, etc.) and activities for which they are responsible;</p> <p>(3) Supporting the work of the Climate Adaptation Network, which includes recommending to the Director employees who have the technical expertise to serve on the Network;</p> <p>(4) Ensuring proper training is available to all employees who implement or otherwise engage in resource management activities for the Service, and identifying or developing training as needed;</p> <p>(5) Reviewing and updating existing decisionmaking processes and management plans to integrate the principles and values identified in this policy;</p>

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Table 1 1: Responsibilities for Climate Change Adaptation Policy and Program	
These employees...	Are responsible for...
	<p>(6) Providing executive-level representation on steering committees for LCCs and on stakeholder advisory committees for the Climate Science Centers, as appropriate;</p> <p>(7) Addressing the vulnerability of Service infrastructure and facilities as they may be affected by climate change, including seeking expert assistance and partnering with the General Services Administration (GSA) as appropriate; and</p> <p>(8) Promoting adaptive and flexible approaches to climate adaptation.</p>
D. Project Leaders, Managers, and Supervisors	<p>(1) Ensuring that they and the employees for which they are responsible become familiar with the Department's climate change adaptation policy (523 DM 1), this policy, the Service's climate change strategic plan, and the <i>National Fish, Wildlife, and Plants Climate Adaptation Strategy</i>; and</p> <p>(2) Implementing these policies and the strategic plan while planning for and performing their duties.</p>
E. Employees	<p>(1) Becoming familiar with the Department's climate change adaptation policy (523 DM 1), this policy, the Service's climate change strategic plan, and the <i>National Fish, Wildlife, and Plants Climate Adaptation Strategy</i>; and</p> <p>(2) Implementing these policies and the strategic plan while planning for and performing their duties.</p>

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