

The National Climate Assessment:

Information about the Draft Third National Climate Assessment Report

What is the National Climate Assessment (NCA)?

The NCA is an important resource for understanding and communicating climate change science and impacts in the United States. It informs the nation about already observed changes, the current status of the climate, and anticipated trends for the future. The NCA report process integrates scientific information from multiple sources and sectors to highlight key findings and significant gaps in our knowledge. The NCA also establishes consistent methods for evaluating climate impacts in the U.S. in the context of broader global change. Finally, findings from the NCA provide input to federal science priorities and are used by U.S. citizens, communities, and businesses as they create more sustainable and environmentally sound plans for the nation's future.



What are the objectives of the NCA?

The NCA is envisioned as an inclusive, nationwide process with many key objectives, including:

- Evaluating, integrating, and assessing relevant climate science and information from multiple sources
- Summarizing and synthesizing the findings of the U.S. Global Change Research Program
- Increasing understanding of what is known and not known about climate change
- Informing climate science research priorities
- Building climate assessment capacity, including vulnerability assessment and documentation of impacts in regions and sectors
- Supporting climate-literacy and skilled use of NCA findings

What is new about the Third NCA?

The NCA process and third report set the stage for more comprehensive assessments in the future. It differs from previous U.S. climate assessments in a variety of ways:

- It is an ongoing process, rather than a periodic report-writing activity
- The NCA includes climate impacts and projections, but also assesses progress in response activities such as adaptation and mitigation
- Partnerships inside and outside of the government support this effort, including entities in both the public and the private sectors
- National indicators of change within regions and sectors are being developed, along with consistent and ongoing methods for evaluation
- This NCA report will be entirely web-based and the final report will be submitted as an e-book; this allows easier access to data for citizens and scientists and transparent "line of sight" between data and conclusions
- This NCA is designed to support decision making processes within and across regions and sectors of the U.S. while also considering the international context of U.S. activities and impacts

Who is responsible for the NCA?

The Global Change Research Act of 1990 requires an assessment report at least every four years. The federal government is responsible for producing these reports through the U.S. Global Change Research Program (USGCRP), a collaboration of 13 federal science agencies. A 60 member federal advisory committee, the National Climate Assessment Development Advisory Committee (NCADAC), has been charged with developing the NCA report and recommendations about the ongoing assessment process. The report is being written by 240 authors drawn from academia; local, state, and federal government; the private sector; and the non-profit sector.

How do I comment on the draft NCA report?

The NCADAC released their draft of the Third NCA Report for expert review and public comment in early 2013 (review period: 1/14/13 – 4/12/13). The review period allows individuals and groups to examine the current version of the report and provide comments aimed at improving it. The report and online comment tool are available at <http://ncadac.globalchange.gov>.

What topics are covered in the Third NCA Report?

The Third NCA Report documents how climate change impacts regions (depicted on the map below) and sectors across the United States and society's responses to climate change.



- Our Changing Climate
- Water Resources
- Energy Supply and Use
- Transportation
- Agriculture
- Forestry
- Ecosystems and Biodiversity
- Human Health
- Water, Energy, and Land Use
- Urban Systems, Infrastructure, and Vulnerability
- Tribal, Indigenous, and Native Lands and Resources
- Land Use and Land Cover Change
- Rural Communities
- Biogeochemical Cycles
- Oceans and Marine Resources
- Coastal Zone Development and Ecosystems
- Decision Support
- Mitigation
- Adaptation
- Research Agenda for Climate Change Science
- The NCA Long-Term Process

Next Steps

The NCADAC's draft report will be reviewed by scientists and experts from inside and outside the federal government, the National Academy of Sciences, and the public. The report will be revised in response to these comments. Sustained assessment process activities, such as developing a system of indicators, are already underway. The focus on a continual assessment process means regional and sectoral activities are expected to be ongoing, and reports will be produced on a more frequent basis.

Expected Outcomes and Benefits

The NCA will present a comprehensive picture of the changes in regions and sectors that occur in response to climate variability and change, including effects on public health and human well-being, the economy, infrastructure, and the environment. This information will help decision makers throughout the country design adaptation policies, help citizens prepare themselves for climate change impacts, and help everyone understand how their everyday decisions impact the climate and the environment.



How can I get involved in the NCA?

There are multiple ways to be involved, including joining NCAnet, a network of organizations working with the NCA to engage producers and users of assessment information; providing review comments on NCA reports; or by directly engaging in data collection, regional or sectoral assessment activities, outreach efforts, or other components of the sustained assessment process. Visit the NCA website, <http://assessment.globalchange.gov>, for more information.

The National Climate Assessment is an activity of the United States Global Change Research Program, whose vision is to create "A nation, globally engaged and guided by science, meeting the challenges of climate and global change."