

# A Five-Year Action Plan

## *To implement the Climate Change Strategic Plan*

Climate change is the most compelling conservation challenge of our generation. It will affect fish and wildlife profoundly. To address this challenge, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has developed a draft Climate Change Strategic Plan. This draft plan, which has been released to conservation partners and the public for review and comment, establishes a basic framework within which the Service and its employees will work with the larger conservation community to safeguard fish, wildlife and their habitats in the face of accelerating climate change. It looks broadly at how climate change is affecting fish, wildlife and their habitats and what the agency's role will be in the conservation community as it addresses climate change.

A group of career Service employees developed a series of short-term actions designed to lay the groundwork for future actions on climate change. Those are already being implemented. This team also developed a set of proposed actions designed to implement the draft Strategic Plan over the next five years. Those proposed actions were distributed to all Service employees for review and comment.

After refining the plan based on internal comments and suggestions, we have begun to gather and incorporate appropriate ideas and suggestions from the public and our conservation partners, with the goal of finalizing the plan and beginning implementation in 2010. This Action Plan, which will be incorporated as an appendix to the draft Strategic Plan, details longer-term actions to be implemented through 2013. Considered as a whole, these actions – under the broad categories of adaptation, mitigation and engagement – will allow us to address the most pressing, near-term climate challenges to fish and wildlife. At the same time, these steps will help us lay a strong foundation for the Service's long-term response to climate change.

### A Summary of Actions:

#### Adaptation

**Goal 1** – We will develop and apply capacity for biological planning and conservation design to drive conservation at broad landscape scales. Proposed actions include:

- Develop a National Fish and Wildlife Adaptation Strategy;
- Access regional climate science and modeling expertise through regional climate science partnerships;
- Develop Landscape Conservation Cooperatives to acquire biological planning and conservation design expertise;
- Conduct species and habitat vulnerability assessments;
- Incorporate climate change into all Service activities and decisions;
- Provide requested support to State and Tribal Managers to address climate change issues that affect the Service's Trust Resources;
- Evaluate laws, regulations and policies to identify barriers to and opportunities for successful implementation of climate change actions.

**Goal 2** – We will plan and deliver landscape conservation that supports climate change adaptations by fish, wildlife, plants and habitats of ecological and societal significance. Proposed actions include:



*Savannah National Wildlife Refuge by Jerry Tollison*

- Implement National Fish and Wildlife Adaptation Strategy as the Service's long-term adaptive response to climate change;
- Take conservation action for climate-vulnerable species;
- Promote habitat connectivity and integrity;
- Identify and fill priority freshwater needs;
- Manage genetic resources;
- Reduce susceptibility to diseases, pathogens and pests;
- Conserve coastal and marine resources;
- Address Fish and Wildlife needs in renewable energy development;
- Reduce non-climate change ecosystem stressors;
- Foster international coordination for landscape conservation.



**Goal 3** – Develop monitoring and research partnerships that will provide complete and objective information to plan, deliver, evaluate and improve actions that help fish and wildlife adapt to accelerating climate change. Proposed actions include:

- Develop a National Biological Inventory and Monitoring (I&M) Partnership;
- Promote physical science and remote-sensing monitoring programs;
- Develop research and monitoring capability for use in landscape conservation;
- Further develop collaborative research partnerships.

### *Mitigation*

**Goal 4** – We will achieve carbon neutrality by 2020. Proposed actions include:

- Reduce the carbon footprint of the Service’s facilities, vehicles, workforce and operations;
- Reduce the Service’s land management carbon footprint;
- Offset the remaining carbon balance.

**Goal 5** – We will build capacity to understand, apply and share biological carbon sequestration science and work with partners to sequester atmospheric GHGs in strategic locations. Proposed actions include:

- Develop biological carbon sequestration expertise;
- Develop standards, guidelines and best management practices for biological carbon sequestration;
- Integrate biological carbon sequestration activities into landscape conservation approaches;
- Facilitate biological carbon sequestration internationally;
- Facilitate biological carbon sequestration research;
- Evaluate geological carbon sequestration.

### *Engagement*

**Goal 6** – We will engage Service employees, our public and private partners, our key constituencies and stakeholders, and everyday citizens in a new era of collaborative conservation to seek solutions to the impacts of climate change and other 21<sup>st</sup> century stressors to fish, wildlife and habitats. Proposed actions include:

- Provide Service employees with climate change information, education and training;
- Share climate change information, education and training opportunities with external audiences;
- Forge alliances and create forums on climate change to exchange information and knowledge and to influence policy internationally.

### **Meeting the challenge**

Climate change must become our highest priority. Consequently, we will deploy our resources, creativity and energy in a long-term campaign to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and safeguard fish, wildlife and their habitats. Our strategic plan commits us to reaching inward to every part of our organization and reaching outward to the larger conservation community to tackle climate change as a community venture and build the philosophies, relationships and capabilities needed to succeed. With all the steps laid out in this Action Plan, we will move forward enthusiastically in working across the conservation community to usher in a new era of interdependent conservation that will sustain fish, wildlife and their habitats in the face of climate change.

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>.