

CONSERVING FISH & WILDLIFE IN AN ERA OF CLIMATE CHANGE

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Defenders of Wildlife



Western Governors' Association Wildlife Corridors Initiative

Climate Change Working Group Report June 2008

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POLICY CHALLENGES AND RECOMMENDED RESPONSES

1. Over-arching
2. Science and Knowledge
3. Institutional
4. Private Lands
5. Funding



OVER-ARCHING POLICY CHALLENGES

Issues Are Complex

- Numerous interactions and feedbacks.
- Solutions involve short-term actions and long-term planning.
- No simple fixes causes many to feel overwhelmed.



Uncertainty

- Often equated with ignorance or absence of information.
- Result may be wait-and-see approach.
- No action is a decision that may carry greatest risk.



Problems of Scale

- Global phenomenon.
- Important effects not felt for decades.
- Too large or too far off to be managed.
- Difficult for managers and planners to address.



SCIENCE AND KNOWLEDGE CHALLENGES

- Recognize monitoring is central to successful adaptation.
- Accept planning based on limited knowledge.
- Foster coordinated management.



Recommended Policy Responses

Create Wildlife Adaptation Advisory Council:

- Climate-impact assessments.
- Regional habitat priorities.
- Target species task forces.
- Coordinated monitoring.
- Long-term, multi-state research.



Establish regional adaptation information clearinghouse—

- Access to current scientific & policy information.
- Data stewardship.
- Dissemination of information about policies and analyses.



INSTITUTIONAL CHALLENGES

- Protect existing crucial habitats across jurisdictional boundaries.
- Preserve options to conserve habitats that may become crucial.
- Support landscape planning and adaptation to changing patterns.



INSTITUTIONAL CHALLENGES

- Current legal structures favor stability.
- Policies not flexible enough to handle uncertainty and changing information.
- Flexibility needs conflict with jurisdictional boundaries and slow rates of change.



Recommended Policy Responses

- Coordinate strategic, landscape scale adaptation activities.
- Consider wildlife adaptation models and coordinate planning under NEPA.
- Require federal plans and regulatory standards to protect crucial habitats.



Recommended Policy Responses

- Coordinate state agency assistance to local governments.
- Evaluate state laws and statewide policies.
- Require state programs and local planning to protect identified habitats.



Recommended Policy Responses

- Strategically plan and adaptively manage for hydrologic changes.
- Maximize water conservation.
- Add water storage capacity.
- Develop State Invasive Species Strategies.



PRIVATE LANDS CHALLENGES

- Crucial habitats increasingly threatened by fragmentation.
- Will worsen as climate change shifts and shrinks habitat mosaic.
- Need for greater flexibility and use of incentives.



Recommended Policy Responses

- Enact tax benefits for landowners who protect crucial habitat.
- Give priority to crucial wildlife habitats in Farm Bill conservation programs.
- Weight carbon offsets to foster crucial habitat protection.



Recommended Policy Responses

- Provide outreach and assistance to help landowners enroll crucial habitats in offset programs.
- Make greater state and local use of voluntary, flexible term easements and leases.



FUNDING CHALLENGES

- Insufficient funding at any government level.
- Inconsistent and short-term funding.
- Absence of secure, long-term revenue streams and mechanisms.



Recommended Policy Responses

- Dedicate revenue to wildlife adaptation.
- Provide long-term funding guarantee.
- Provide matching funding for state and local crucial habitat protection.



Recommended Policy Responses

- Base expenditures on adaptation strategies/SWAPs.
- Prioritize State-level funding to encourage local investments.
- Give priority to grant requests that maintain landscape connectivity.

