

The National Climate Assessment: Preparing the Nation for Change

U.S. Global Change Research Program (USGCRP)

What Is a Climate Assessment?

Climate assessments are based on observations made across the country, and incorporate advances in natural and social sciences to provide an integrated analysis of climate impacts and vulnerability. The Global Change Research Act of 1990 mandates that a national climate assessment of the United States be conducted every four years, resulting in a report to the President and Congress. Climate assessments serve important functions including: identifying advances in the science, providing critical analysis of climate-related issues, highlighting key policy-relevant findings, and guiding climate change decision-making. This third National Climate Assessment (NCA) will be a comprehensive assessment of climate changes, impacts, vulnerabilities, and response strategies within the context of how individual communities and the nation as a whole can create sustainable and environmentally sound paths to development.

What's New about this Assessment?

The newest NCA will differ from previous U.S. climate assessment efforts by:

- Focusing more on supporting decisions related to adaptation and mitigation, as well as on evaluating the Nation's progress in reducing climate vulnerability
- Building a long-term and ongoing process for evaluation of climate risks and opportunities with private and public sector partners
- Identifying national indicators of change within regions and sectors, and establish consistent, ongoing methods for evaluating them



The Global Change Research Act of 1990 (GCRA), Section 106, requires an assessment that:

- Integrates, evaluates, and interprets the findings of the Program [the US Global Change Research Program] and discusses the scientific uncertainties associated with such findings;
- Analyzes the effects of global change on the natural environment, agriculture, energy production and use, land and water resources, transportation, human health and welfare, human social systems, and biological diversity; and
- Analyzes current trends in global change, both human-induced and natural, and projects major trends for the subsequent 25 to 100 years.



United States
Global Change
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Matching photographs taken 18 months apart during the most serious period of recent drought show a significant decrease in Lake Powell. Photos by John Dohrenwend

What Are the Goals of the National Climate Assessment?

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

- Synthesizing relevant climate science and information
- Increasing understanding of what is known and not known about climate
- Identifying information needs related to preparing for and reducing the impacts of climate change
- Evaluating the progress of adaptation and mitigation activities
- Informing climate science priorities
- Building assessment capacity in regions and sectors
- Building a more climate-literate citizenry and supporting the skilled use of NCA findings

What Will the National Climate Assessment Produce?

The NCA intends to produce a variety of ongoing data, products, and processes:

- A report (or reports) to Congress that meet the mandated requirements
- Rigorously vetted, Internet-based data and products
- Improved regional, sectoral, and institutional assessment and science translation capacity
- Ongoing national evaluations of changes in climate trends, impacts, and risks
- Assessment guidelines, metadata, and quality review procedures
- Communication and education products to support a broad understanding of climate

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."



For more information about the NCA, visit <http://globalchange.gov>.
To sign up for the NCA bimonthly e-newsletter, email engagement@usgcrp.gov.