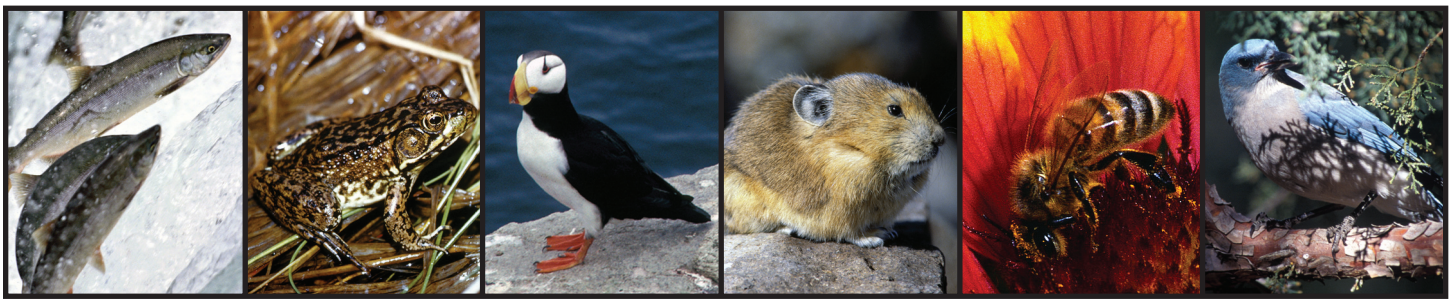

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# National Fish and Wildlife Climate Adaptation Strategy

*Purpose, Vision, and Guiding Principles*

DRAFT

## Purpose

The National Fish and Wildlife Climate Adaptation Strategy will provide a unified approach—reflecting shared principles and science-based practices—for reducing the impacts of climate change on fish, wildlife, plants, habitats, and associated ecological processes across geographic scales.

## Vision

Ecological systems will continue to sustain healthy, diverse, well-distributed, and abundant populations of fish, wildlife, plants, and human communities that are adapted to survive and thrive in a world impacted by unprecedented and accelerating global climate change.

## Guiding Principles

Adapting to climate change will require a pragmatic perspective. Ecological disruptions associated with a changing climate may be extreme and often unpredictable, exacerbating current conservation challenges and making some biodiversity losses inevitable. We are, however, optimistic that we can reduce impacts of climate change and other threats to our wildlife and natural systems—as well as help sustain biodiversity and functioning ecosystems—by adopting the following principles to lead and implement the National Fish and Wildlife Climate Adaptation Strategy:

- Endorse a national, not federal, framework for cooperative climate response. No single sector can effectively respond to climate impacts alone. Therefore a philosophy of collaboration and interdependence must be embraced among federal, state, tribal, and local governments, and between government, academic, and non-governmental organizations. For the Strategy to be effective, it will require an unprecedented commitment for collaboration at all levels of the public and private sector.
- Focus actions and investments on the natural resources of the United States and its territories, while also placing a high priority on global collaboration, particularly across our borders with Canada and Mexico. International collaboration and information-sharing will be critical for the conservation of migratory resources over broad geographic ranges.
- Adopt landscape-scale approaches that integrate science and management, placing particular emphasis on: 1) ecological systems and function, 2) strengthened observational systems, 3) model-based projections, 4) species-habitat linkages, 5) risk assessment, and 6) active and passive adaptive management.
- Ensure that the Strategy is informed by and integrated with the social and political management goals of other resource sectors, including energy, forestry, water management, transportation, and agriculture.
- Move beyond our professional boundaries and engage the public through communication and education to gain broad support for adaptation strategies. To ensure success, we must place a high priority on public outreach.
- Identify critical scientific and management needs, such as new information technology, training to expand technical skills, or new policies and regulations. If there are barriers to meeting these needs, find creative solutions, such as developing new funding sources or working with policymakers.
- Ensure that adaptation and mitigation efforts are not carried out in isolation, but instead are well-coordinated within the context of current conservation efforts and short- and long-term adaptation goals.
- Understand that time is of the essence and the predictions of the more-pessimistic modeling scenarios have already been exceeded. These challenges therefore require immediate planning and action to understand and address the impacts of climate change throughout this century and beyond.

Note: This document was created by conservation professionals attending a series of Conservation Leadership Forums focused on climate change adaptation in June 2009 and January 2010 at Shepherdstown, West Virginia.

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