

Climate Change Program Update August 2009

DFG Climate Change Goals: Unity—Integration—Action

- Develop a climate change strategy within the Department's management and policy branches.
- Integrate a thought process into all of our natural resources activities that actively addresses climate change.

The Department's climate change program, climate change advisor position, climate change task force, and a regional climate change committee are an anomaly among the state fish and game agencies and illustrate the Department's commitment to the issue. In my role as the Climate Change Advisor to the Department I continue to look for ways to use the momentum-interest-and funding behind climate change to bring attention to new and existing conservation actions the Department is working on. By continuing to integrate climate change into Department activities and search for those no regrets actions (good conservation work already doing and can continue to do) we show progress that will attract funding and other resources.

With the appropriate resources and staff the Department will continue to focus on minimizing the effects of climate change on the state's natural resources through the development of adaptation and mitigation measures, policies, and practices that provide clear benefits to fish and wildlife on a landscape level and help species persist in the face of a changing climate. The most important thing we can do as a Department is to make sure that the Department is well positioned to apply for and use any federal money when it comes available. The Department's engagement on climate change issues insures that fish and wildlife have a placeholder in any state, regional, and national conversations and decisions. When it comes to funding available for climate change adaptation and mitigation activities, natural resource conservation will be competing directly with other critical sectors such as public health and infrastructure. As a Department we need to make the case that conservation and management of natural resources is a critical component of the challenges that other sectors face and that the Department is a part of the climate change solution.

Climate Change Funding Opportunities

American Clean Energy & Security Act 2009 (H.R. 2454): The bill establishes national policy to better safeguard natural resources from climate change. It provides one percent of revenues from a cap-and-trade system to domestic natural resource adaptation over the next 10 years and increases the allocation to four percent by 2027. Of that initial 1% the State Fish and Game Agencies are slated to receive 32.5%. Funds to state Fish and Game agencies will be apportioned according to the Pittman-Robertson (WCRP) formula. Match requirements are proposed to be relaxed and proposals range from 75:25 to 90:10 match. Some of the projections for funding that will be available to California ranges from \$9.7M in 2012 to \$71M in 2030. In order to be eligible for this funding the Department will be required to have a **climate change adaptation strategy** approved by

the Secretary for the Department of Interior that can be incorporated into wildlife action plan.

President's Budget FY2010: The President's budget proposes \$40M for States and Tribes to integrate climate change in State Wildlife Action Plans and in similar tribal plans. The emphasis would be to develop scientific data on climate impacts that occur and those predicted to occur and to translate this scientific input into on-the-ground strategies for land and water managers. The U.S. House of Representatives supported this increase and put it in their version of the appropriations bill and changed the match from 50:50 to 75:25. However the Senate did not correspond with the level of funding nor a change in the match. They provided a \$5M increase. The Senate Interior Appropriations and full Appropriations Committee have already voted in support of this bill. It next goes to the full Senate for a floor vote, likely in early September.

Stimulus funding- Good news! Elkhorn Slough received almost \$4M for the restoration of 450 acres in the Parsons Slough wetland complex that will boost ecosystem resilience to climate change by increasing the retention of sediment, critical to keeping pace with sea level rise.

In addition to projects that are directly tied to climate change we also need to re-examine the way we talk about our current planning and management actions. One of the ways in which the Department will respond or be proactive in terms of climate change impacts is through the conservation actions we are putting on the ground now and how we communicate these actions and planning efforts to public and policy makers is critical. For example, many of the projects that the Department submitted for stimulus funding can be considered climate change adaptation actions that are directly related to helping species persist in a rapidly changing climate (reducing existing or new stressors, improving connectivity-removing barriers, etc). The more we can talk about how our actions will help us manage and conserve resources in a changing climate the more successful we will be in attracting additional resources.

Private funding: Organizations such as Doris Duke, Hewlett Foundation, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF), Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS), and others are actively funding climate change related projects. Several organizations are specifically funding climate change projects that are tied into the Wildlife Action Plans (WCS, NFWF, and Doris Duke). There are many private organizations that want to use their money towards climate change projects but don't know what to fund. Most groups are not interested in funding monitoring or planning projects but want to fund something that delivers climate change adaptation or mitigation actions on the ground.

Department Activities

National level activities: The Department is working closely with the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies on the climate change committee, climate change think tank, and a national working group for creating a guidance document for how states can integrate climate change into their wildlife action plans. In addition, Director Koch has

participated in meetings with the USFWS and other partners regarding a national climate change strategy.

Regional activities: The Department initiated and is leading the climate change committee for the Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (WAFWA). The first meeting was held on July 12th in Newport Beach. The committee is co-chaired by Director Mayer (NV). WAFWA is the first regional association to have a climate change committee and other regional associations are following. Materials from that meeting are available on the Department's climate change intranet site <http://dfgintranet/portal/BusinessOperations/BusinessServices/ClimateChangeResources/tabid/609/Default.aspx>

State level activities

- Director Koch is a member of the CA Climate Action Team (CAT).
- The Department played a major role in the creation of the **California Climate Adaptation Strategy (CAS)** spearheaded by the Natural Resources Agency. This strategy is one of the first of its kind in the nation. The document was released on August 3rd as a discussion draft and is open for public comment for 45 days. Public meetings are being scheduled and a final version is planned for release in the fall. <http://www.climatechange.ca.gov/adaptation/>
- The Department is a member of the Bay Area Ecosystems Climate Change Consortium-a demonstration project for the bay area.

Internally we continue to take steps to integrate climate change into policy and management branches.

- There is an ongoing effort to insert climate change as a consideration into all Department documents and program activities.
- Climate change **adaptation planning** efforts:
 - The Department's version of the CAS is coming out in the end of August. The Department specific strategy contains the same elements and key strategies as the biodiversity section of the CAS. However, the Department's version provides more detail and broader scope than what could be represented in the CAS. This document builds on the outcomes of the SWAP-Climate Change workshop held in June 2008 as well as input from stakeholders and DFG employees that were submitted after a public meeting held last December.
- **Region 1** has initiated a climate change committee and is pursuing key efforts to support the region and the Department's climate change initiatives.
- **Elkhorn Slough** has received a little under \$4M in funding for climate change related research and actions.
- Small groups of staff have assembled to tackle "burning issues" that require the Department's immediate attention including integrating climate change into CEQA, FERC re-license, and discussing carbon sequestration policy for Department lands as examples.

Capacity building and outreach: The Department has a climate change web site with resources for staff as well as an intranet page with information from task force meetings, and grant proposals. *Upcoming* CA Outdoors September/October issue will feature a climate change article.

Partnerships: On going communication with stakeholders (state, federal, NGO, university) is a key component of the climate change program. In addition to regular updates via email, stakeholders are brought together twice a year. *Upcoming* **stakeholder meeting September 3rd** at the CEC auditorium in Sacramento from 9-12:30. The focus of this meeting is to hear from stakeholders about existing or new initiatives and look for ways to partner or leverage exiting resources to continue to put actions on the ground as we finalize an adaptation approach.

Mitigation & Adaptation: Department employees have created a “Going Green” sustainability initiative that is under development The DFG Going Green document is focused on reducing the Department’s carbon footprint. The document details actions that the Department could take to create a more climate change friendly way of doing business. Many of the examples mentioned would not only help decrease the Department’s contribution to the climate change challenge but also save the Department valuable resources and funds.