

Defenders of Wildlife, National Wildlife Federation, The Wildlife Society, Union of Concerned Scientists, [more to come...]

June 2, 2017

The Honorable Ken Calvert
Chair
House Appropriations Subcommittee
Interior, Environment and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
2205 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Betty McCollum
Ranking Member
House Appropriations Subcommittee
Interior, Environment and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
2256 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski
Chair
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee
Interior, Environment and Related Agencies
709 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Tom Udall
Ranking Member
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee
Interior, Environment and Related Agencies
531 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Representative Calvert, Representative McCollum, Senator Murkowski, and Senator Udall:

We are writing on behalf of the millions of members of our organizations to urge you to support funding at the FY17 enacted level (\$26.4 M) for the Department of the Interior's National and Regional Climate Adaptation Science Centers (CASCs), which are within the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) Land Resources account. The President's FY18 budget proposes a 34% decrease in overall funding for this program and would result in elimination of half of the eight regional centers. These cuts would dramatically undermine the ability of the Department of the Interior (DOI) to support federal, state, tribal, and private sector wildlife and land managers as they seek to sustain the nation's natural resources and reduce risks to them from climatic and land use changes.

This science-based program was established by Congress during the Bush Administration in response to challenges faced by fish and wildlife managers in maintaining the ecological viability and economic vitality of our natural resources in the face of a changing climate. These challenges have only grown more acute as managers face increasing climate-related threats, such as long-term droughts, massive wildfires, extreme precipitation and flooding events, spreading invasive species, and rising sea levels.

The Climate Adaptation Science Centers respond to these challenges by conducting research on the impacts and risks a changing environment pose to wildlife and other natural resources. CASCs working with managers and decision-makers to help them apply this science in crafting management strategies capable of adapting to changing conditions and reducing climate-related risks and vulnerabilities. This is accomplished through the combined efforts of a national center (formerly known as the National Climate Change and Wildlife Science Center), housed at

USGS, and a network of eight regional centers (previously known as DOI Climate Science Centers), which are partnerships between USGS and leading research universities. These university-based collaborations ensure that the regional centers leverage and are well coordinated with other research and outreach capabilities in the region, as well as leverage significant non-federal funding.

The National and Regional CASCs provide rigorous, peer-reviewed science and tools to help fish and wildlife managers, federal and state land management agencies, tribal and indigenous communities, and others to develop and execute climate-resilient management strategies. The centers focus on delivering sound and actionable science that address priority stakeholder needs, including:

- Helping Department of the Interior and other resource managers protect and sustain our nation's fish and wildlife, public lands, and water resources;
- Assisting state wildlife agencies in assessing climate risks to their species and habitats, and identifying priority conservation and management actions;
- Aiding tribes and indigenous communities to help them understand, prepare for, and adapt to climate risks to tribal lands and resources; and
- Educating and training the next generation of climate adaptation scientists, and building capacity in the broader resource management community for the appropriate application of climate science.

The most recent National Climate Assessment documents how climate-related disasters and economic disruptions are on the rise, affecting every region and impacting communities across the country. Ensuring the vitality of the nation's \$877 billion outdoor economy, which provides more than 7.8 million jobs, will rely on our capacity to prepare and appropriately manage for increasing climate-related risks and impacts. The ability of federal, state, tribal, and private managers and decision-makers to successfully minimize the economic and ecological risks of a changing climate depends on the continued availability of the sound and rigorous climate adaptation science that the National and Regional CASCs provide.

Given the critical importance of these programs for ensuring the health of the nation's fish and wildlife resources, for promoting responsible and forward-looking stewardship of public and private lands, and for ensuring the continued vitality of the nation's outdoor economy, we urge you to provide FY18 funding comparable to the FY17 enacted levels (\$26.4 M) for the Department of the Interior's National and Regional Climate Adaptation Science Centers.

Sincerely,