

US EPA ARCHIVE DOCUMENT



THE ADMINISTRATOR OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20460

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U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Policy Statement on Climate Change Adaptation

(Revised June 2014)

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is committed to identifying and responding to the challenges that a changing climate poses to human health and the environment. The EPA will take the actions necessary to ensure that it continues to fulfill its mission of protecting human health and the environment even as the climate changes.

The global climate is changing. Since the publication of the first EPA "Policy Statement on Climate Change Adaptation" in June 2011, new and stronger evidence indicates that human-caused climate change is affecting people in every region of the U.S. We are now seeing a wide range of impacts associated with human-induced climate change. These impacts pose significant challenges to the EPA's ability to accomplish its mission, and the agency must adapt if it is to continue fulfilling its statutory, regulatory and programmatic requirements. The EPA must plan for changes in climate and incorporate consideration of climate change into many of its programs, policies, rules and operations to ensure they are effective under future climatic conditions.

The EPA must also work with its partners in communities across the nation and internationally to prepare for and respond to climate change. States, tribes and local communities share responsibility for protecting human health and the environment, and partnerships with the EPA are at the heart of the nation's environmental-protection system. These partnerships are critical for efficient, effective and equitable implementation of climate-adaptation strategies. A central element of the EPA's efforts to adapt to a changing climate must be to build and strengthen the adaptive capacity of its partners in the states, tribes and local communities in ways that are critical to attaining the EPA's mission.

The EPA's commitments are part of a larger federal effort to enhance climate preparedness and resilience across the nation. President Obama's Climate Action Plan and Executive Order 13653, "Preparing the United States for the Impacts of Climate Change," call for the federal government to strengthen the adaptive capacity of its programs and operations and to help communities nationwide prepare for a changing climate. The goal is to promote a healthy, prosperous nation that is resilient to a changing climate.

Background

The EPA released its draft Climate Change Adaptation Plan in February 2013. The plan identifies 10 priority actions the EPA will take to integrate climate-adaptation planning into its programs, policies, rules and operations. The EPA in November 2013 released for public comment the 17 draft implementation plans prepared by its national environmental-program offices, national support offices and all 10 regional offices. These draft plans provide more detail on how the program and regional offices will carry out the work called for in the agencywide plan. Taken together, these plans provide a roadmap for how the EPA will continue to implement the agency's programs, serving all communities

that are facing climate-related challenges and working with them to protect human health and the environment even as the climate changes.

Directives

I am proud of the progress the EPA has already made. Many programs throughout the EPA have already begun to consider and address the implications of a changing climate and have partnered with other federal agencies, states, tribes and local communities nationwide to promote climate resilience and adaptation. Nevertheless, more needs to be done. I am, therefore, directing that the EPA immediately implement the following actions consistent with President Obama's Climate Action Plan, Executive Order 13653, the EPA's Climate Change Adaptation Plan and the 17 implementation plans:

(1) Modernize EPA financial assistance programs to encourage climate-resilient investments: The EPA will encourage and support smarter, more climate-resilient investments by states, tribes and local communities. It will do so by integrating climate-adaptation considerations, as appropriate, into discretionary and nondiscretionary financial mechanisms that support state, tribal and community actions where climate change is recognized as relevant to the actions being undertaken. This includes agency grants, cooperative agreements, loans, technical assistance, contracts and other programs in which the outcomes to be supported are understood to be sensitive to changes in climate, such as clean air and safe drinking water, or would be more effective if they incorporate considerations of climate change, such as development of models and tools to support decision making.

(2) Provide information, tools, training and technical support for climate-change preparedness and resilience: The EPA will continue to support regions, states, tribes, local communities and the private sector by producing and delivering information, data, tools, training and technical support they need to increase resilience and adapt to climate change. This effort will be coordinated with and linked to the interagency initiative established under Executive Order 13653 to build a climate.data.gov Web-based portal for data and tools relevant to climate issues and decision making.

(3) Implement priority actions identified in the EPA's Climate Change Adaptation Plan and the Implementation Plans: The EPA will carry out the 10 priority actions called for in its Climate Change Adaptation Plan. Every EPA national-program and regional office will begin to implement the priority actions identified in its implementation plan. The EPA will make these actions a priority within the annual budget process.

(4) Focus on the most vulnerable people and places: The EPA will continue to place special emphasis on and work in partnership with overburdened populations. Certain parts of the population, such as children; the elderly; the poor; tribes and indigenous people; environmental-justice communities; and small rural communities, can be especially vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. The agency will engage the most vulnerable communities to improve their capacity to prepare for and avoid damages from climate-change impacts. The EPA will give special consideration to tribes to support the development of their adaptive capacity, given the unique government-to-government relationship that exists between the U.S. government and the 565 federally recognized tribes.

(5) Measure and evaluate performance: The EPA recognizes the importance of monitoring performance, evaluating activities and acting on the lessons learned. The EPA will evaluate its climate-change-adaptation actions on an ongoing basis to assess the agency's progress toward implementing climate-change-adaptation planning through the agency's programs, policies, rules and operations; modernizing programs in ways that encourage climate-resilient investments; and providing information,

tools, training and technical support that communities need to increase resilience and adapt to climate change. Through ongoing evaluation, the agency will continue to improve how it mainstreams climate-change-adaptation planning into its activities. The EPA will evaluate what worked and why, as well as what did not work and why not. Based on the lessons, the EPA will adjust the way adaptation is integrated into its activities.

(6) Continue agency planning for climate change related risk: Consistent with the requirements of Executive Order 13653, the EPA will regularly update its Climate Change Adaptation Plan no later than one year after the publication of each quadrennial *National Climate Assessment Report* required by section 106 of the Global Change Research Act of 1990 (15 U.S.C. 2936). The EPA will also report on progress made under its Climate Change Adaptation Plan, as well as any updates made to the plan, through the annual Strategic Sustainability Performance Plan process.

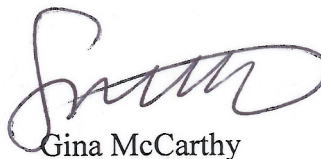
(7) Coordinate with other federal agencies: The EPA will coordinate with other federal agencies on climate-change-adaptation challenges that cut across agency jurisdictions. The EPA will also coordinate its activities with other federal agencies when working in the same communities to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the combined federal effort. The EPA will also support the activities of the White House Council on Climate Preparedness and Resilience, which coordinates and tracks progress on all interagency efforts related to climate preparedness and resilience.

Coordination and Implementation

The EPA's senior climate-change-adaptation official, in close collaboration with the EPA's national-program and regional offices, is responsible for ensuring implementation of all aspects of this policy. This policy statement does not alter or affect any existing duty, responsibility or authority of individual offices.

The Cross-EPA Work Group on Climate Change Adaptation, established by the Deputy Administrator in January 2011, is responsible for overseeing the implementation of the EPA Climate Change Adaptation Plan. The EPA's senior climate-change-adaptation official serves as chairperson of the work group, which includes representatives from every national environmental-program office, regional office and appropriate national support offices.

This policy directive is effective immediately and will remain in effect until it is amended, superseded or revoked.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Gina McCarthy', is positioned above the printed name.

Gina McCarthy