

LOCKHEED MARTIN CORP

Moderator: Julie Marcy
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Julie Marcy Welcome everyone. I'm Julie Marcy, a research biologist at the ERDC Environmental Lab, and I'll be serving as your webinar host today.

We're fortunate to have a restoration webinar on the National Fish, Wildlife, and Plants Climate Adaptation Strategy by Janet Cushing of the Institute of Water Resources today.

As always, if you have good idea for webinar topics, please let me know. You could also let (Jodi Staebell) -- now known as (Jodi Creswell) -- know. We always welcome your topic ideas.

Just a few quick notes. These are well-known to those of you who have joined us before. We do record this session and then post it on the Environmental Gateway under the Learning Exchange.

If you're calling in as a group, if you would, take a moment to identify the office that you're calling in from, if it's not on your sign-in, and also the number of people in your group -- you can do that by using the chat feature -- just so we know how many participants we have and where you're calling in from. That's very helpful to us.

We will also have questions and answers during the last 15 minutes of the presentation. But as always, if you have a question or need something defined as Janet speaks, please feel free to interrupt either using chat or verbally over the phone, and ask your questions so we can provide an answer to you.

For those of you that are using a speaker phone, remember to keep it on mute when you're listening. This will reduce background noise, especially if you're in a noisy area, and remember to take it off mute if you need to say something to us.

You can register for webinar announcements under the Ecosystem Restoration program if you haven't already on the Gateway Learning Exchange. We encourage folks to sign up for the presentations in advance, but we welcome last-minute attendees as well.

And with that, I'm going to begin our official program today by Janet Cushing of IWR, the Institute for Water Resources. Janet is a biologist and environmental planner with the Institute. And our topic today is the National Fish, Wildlife, and Plant Climate Adaptation Strategy. Miss Janet I will now turn the program over to you.

Janet Cushing: Thank you Julie. Good afternoon and good morning to folks calling in from the West Coast. My name is Janet Cushing from the Institute for Water Resources, which is located in Alexandria, Virginia. And I am going to be giving an overview of the National Fish, Wildlife, and Plant Climate Adaptation Strategy, which is quite a mouthful.

I've been involved in this effort for about a year now. And actually, prior to a year, I was - actually got involved a few months before the official kickoff of

the strategy. And so I wanted to give this overview of the strategy, which is going to come out as a final - as a draft form.

Right now, it's going through some various revisions - last-minute revisions, but it will be coming out in draft very shortly, and it will be going out for agency review. So really this presentation is meant to prepare those of you who might be reviewing this document so you have an idea of really what it's about.

So let's jump right into this with why we need a national strategy for fish, wildlife and plants. And I think those of you who have been involved with various climate change activities have probably seen these reasons that you see up on the slide in terms of, you know, why we're doing this.

And it's really because of two things. One is that the adverse impacts of climate change doesn't respect administrative or political boundaries. And really, in order to be successful for climate change adaptation, it takes a collaborative effort. No single entity or agency can by itself fulfill what needs to be done for a successful climate change adaptation.

And this is recognized by Congress as well. So in the fiscal year of 2010 in the Department of the Interior, Environment and Related Agencies Appropriations Conference Report, Congress had urged the White House Council on Environmental Quality and the Department of the Interior to develop a national government-wide climate adaptation strategy to assist Fish, Wildlife, and Plants in becoming more resilient and able to adapt to the impacts of climate change.

And this need for such a strategy was also reiterated by the Interagency Climate Change Adaptation Task Force in its October 2010 report to the President.

So what exactly is this strategy about? You can see a few points of what it is. And really the key feature is that this is a national strategy. It's not meant to be just a federal strategy. It's really national, so it encompasses federal, state and tribal government agencies.

And this is what we really mean by a multi-partner response as well as a unified approach, so that we would have common goals and common strategies to really try and help fish, wildlife and plants adapt to climate change.

So as far as the target audiences for the strategy, this was discussed quite at length in some of the Conservation Leadership Forums that occurred before the kickoff of this national strategy effort. And what ended up coming out of that is that really there's - it's not meant equally for everyone. Really the primary audience is first and foremost those agencies, federal, state and tribal, that manage natural resources. So that's the - really the key, key audience.

Secondly would be government decision-makers in various sectors. And we said various sectors because we realize the importance of involving other sectors such as agriculture and industry, navigation, et cetera, because this adaptation to climate change really can't happen if it's from a narrow viewpoint. It really has to be, again, a multi-partner effort.

Other audiences would include the non-governmental organizations, natural resource industries, (private landowners). So those are the primary audiences.

And then secondarily we recognize that this strategy could be very informative for our international conservation partners as well as for educators and the public at large.

So what I want to show with this slide is the basic organizational structure of (unintelligible) effort. And the - I have to say this has been one of the most well-organized efforts I've been involved in for something quite as large as this.

And so at the top you have a steering committee which provides the leadership and executive direction for developing the strategy. And before I go on further, I wanted to point out that the actual strategy leads are the US Fish and Wildlife Service, National Ocean and Atmospheric Administration, the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies -- which if you're not familiar with that group, that group represents all 50 state fish and wildlife agencies -- and also the Council on Environmental Quality.

And when this effort started out, it was really being led by CEQ and by the Fish and Wildlife service, and they recognized the importance of involving NOAA as well as the states to co-lead this effort. So I just wanted to put that out there.

Now there's also the management team. And what the management team is composed of are representatives of the strategy leads. And what they do is they essentially act as the project managers for this effort. They deal also with the engagement strategy. And they work with the steering committee and the technical teams that you see below in developing this strategy.

Now on the side there, to the right, is a box called the working group. And those are people who act as essentially the liaisons between the steering committee and the management team. They act as the staff to the steering committee members.

And then finally at the bottom are these technical teams which focus on specific ecosystem (types). And the technical teams are doing the actual content development of the strategy. They are drafting the chapters, they are putting them together, they are doing whatever technical outreach is necessary. So really the technical teams are the workhorses of the strategy itself.

And as far as our Corps representation on it, Chip Smith from the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works Office is the Corps' representative on the steering committee. I have been on the working group and also on the Inland Waters Technical Team. (Lynn Martin) and (Katherine Trott) have been playing tag team on the Coastal Technical Team, so that has been the Corps representation on that.

So what I wanted to do is essentially give you a brief progress report on this whole strategy development. So I'll start out talking about the technical teams.

So as I said, there are five different ecosystem technical teams. The numbers that you see in parentheses on the slide are the number of people on each of those technical teams. And the technical team makeup is really pretty broad. It involves people from federal agencies, state agencies, as well as quite a few tribal government agency representatives.

And what you see up on this next slide are the technical team leadership. And what I wanted to point out here is that at the very least, each technical team

has been led by both a state co-chair as well as a federal co-chair. And in the case of Inland Waters and Forests, we were also very fortunate enough to have a tribal co-chair as well.

And the - under the facilitator comment column are those members of the management team. And what they did was work with their respective technical team co-chairs and those of us who were on the technical teams to make sure that if there were any larger issues or questions that needed to be brought up and discussed by the management team, then they would do so and then come back to us pretty much in the afternoon or the next day of a meeting and give us an answer on how to proceed on certain things.

So really I - like I said before, this has just been a very well-coordinated effort. We had three very successful multi-day meetings during this year to develop, really, the whole draft of the strategy.

So we started out by benchmarking other adaptation strategies. We didn't really want to reinvent the wheel. So we really did quite a thorough search of other adaptation strategies that dealt with fish and wildlife efforts, whether they were state strategies or federal strategies, even those strategies that were developed by NGOs.

And so we took a look at those, looked at the format of those strategies, pooled good ideas from those strategies and pretty much had those benchmarked so we knew what was already out there.

And then what we did was we brainstormed the potential climate change impacts and the drivers and stressors for our particular ecosystem type, and really, from that, developed the strategies and the actions.

And then once we pretty much had those finalized, each technical team tried to identify those issues or strategies and actions that were cost-cutting with other sectors. Again, this was a way to make sure that we weren't having blinders on and realizing that in order for this climate adaptation strategy to work, we really needed to be able to consider the other sectors that really interplay with what people would be doing in terms of fish and wildlife management.

Julie Marcy: And Janet, this is Julie. I can interrupt just...

Janet Cushing: Sure.

Julie Marcy: ...a minute. I'm hearing some background noise on someone's phone. There are some voices in the background and some desk sounds. So if you could, just put your phone on mute and you'll still be able to hear, and that'll eliminate some of that background noise. Thank you.

Janet Cushing: So really the way the strategy framework is lined out is, not too surprisingly, we had a purpose, a vision and a - guiding principles to really help us develop strategy. And these - the purpose, position and the guiding principles were actually developed prior to the official kickoff of the strategy development effort.

And the way these occurred were through three Conservation Leadership Forums, starting back in 2009 and the last two were in 2010. And these forums were used to, one, gauge the support for national strategy but also to really define the purpose of the strategy.

And so the participants of that forum included 70 leaders from federal and state natural resource agencies as well as some from non-governmental environmental conservation groups and as well as professional organizations.

And there were also a series of public listening sessions that were held at various natural resource professional and scientific meetings and conferences around the country from, oh, about March through October of 2010. So these listening sessions were held at the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agency meetings, American Fisheries Society, Ecological Society of America conferences, those sorts of venues.

And people were asked basically what they thought, you know, should be the purpose of a national strategy. They had the opportunity to ask questions. And so the management team came, collected the input from all those sessions and worked to develop those into a purpose, a vision, a guiding principles and from that an overarching goal.

And so the purpose, as you see here, is to inspire natural resource professionals and decision-makers to take action for fish and wildlife and plant resources. And what I wanted to point out here is the word "inspire," which is in bold. Because the strategy is specifically not meant to be prescriptive, it is meant to be used in a way that would help the efforts of those agencies that are trying to manage natural resources wisely, in light of climate change.

And so the vision here really focused on sustainability. I think a number of you, if you have been attending some of the previous climate change talks that have occurred here or perhaps elsewhere, you hear a lot about sustainability. And it's really no different here. Really what we wanted to try and move towards was taking action that would provide sustainable populations.

And so there were a number of guiding principles that came out of that. One is to develop this national framework, have a collaborative effort, again focusing right now on US - on the US and its territories, but with the knowledge that we can't just stop at US boundaries. We really do need to work with Canada and Mexico on some of these actions, again using a landscape or seascape-based approach where science and adaptive management would be used, again as I mentioned earlier, this integration with other sectors, like navigation, energy, agriculture, et cetera.

And there are a number of other bullets here that I think you may have seen in similar types of strategic documents where we need to engage the public, identify the needs. And one of the big bullet points that came out of the listening sessions was that we really need to do something right now because time is of the essence.

And so the overarching goal that came out of this again is, one, that it would be national and unified, and that really that was the only way that we would be able to, as a nation, adapt to climate change effects.

So that purpose, vision, guiding principles and that overarching goal were given to the technical teams as a starting point. And what the technical teams did at the first meeting was to talk about the climate change stressors, talk about the ecosystem needs and come up with kind of a brainstorm of things that we should be doing.

And what was then - what then came out of that was the management team took all that information and pretty much put them into major goals. And so there's seven goals here.

One - and I don't think many of these will be surprising to you if you work in ecosystem management or ecosystem restoration, but the first one, which most people consider to be the most important, was to protect, connect and restore natural areas.

Secondly, we have designing and implementing species and area management activities. Again, that would promote sustainability. And it wasn't just sustainability just for the sake of having high biodiversity. It was also noted that this sustainability was really important for cultural subsistence, recreational and commercial uses.

Third is that it was very important to decrease the impact of non-climate stressors just to reduce the vulnerability of fish, wildlife, and plants to climate change.

And then the last four here about having coordinate inventory, monitoring, information management, risk assessment, decision-making systems. And this is a huge goal here. It's - it almost seems like a hodgepodge, but really the focus was on having something that was coordinated because there are a - quite a few states, other agencies, that are developing climate adaptation plans. And, you know, one of the concerns that CEQ has voiced, states have voiced, and that we heard from NGOs, was that perhaps we're not being as coordinated as we could.

The focus is on building capacity with the idea that additional training might be needed for agency personnel in order to effectively deal with climate change. Again -- and this is a related one for number six, as far as increasing knowledge and information -- and finally, increasing awareness and motivating action. So those are the seven goals that we really had to work with.

Now the strategy outline is pretty much as you see it here, where there's going to be an executive summary, the general introduction, a fairly brief section on the impacts of climate change on fish, wildlife, and plants. And really the whole meat of the strategy is in number four where we talk about the goals and the strategies and the actions.

So what I wanted to do was not necessarily, you know, I - there's absolutely no time to go through every single strategy and action, but I did want to give you a few examples of some of the strategies and actions that various ecosystem technical teams came up with or that were brought to a higher level to be a national strategy and action.

So for example, under Goal number two, which deals with species and area management activities, we have one strategy of managing water resources for a culturally, recreationally and commercially important fish, wildlife, and plants.

And one of the actions that would fall under that strategy is to improve integrated water resource management, including the coordination of surface and ground water withdrawals that would not only meet the needs of fish, wildlife, and plants but also other consumptive human uses. And so this really plays very much into what we do here at the Corps, where we are trying to improve or have integrated water resource management.

Another example is - deals with the goal of building this coordinated inventory and monitoring system as well as other types of systems. And one of the strategies that comes under that goal is to develop, maintain and enhance a national climate change monitoring or sentinel site system.

And then one of the actions that would fall from that is to use existing systems and platforms to develop nationally agreed-upon criteria to identify species and ecosystems that would most likely be affected up climate change. Again the focus here is on coordinated efforts.

And then finally a third example is under the goal of building capacity. We have a strategy of incorporating climate change considerations into our existing natural resources management plans, and that's something that really many states and some tribes and various federal agencies are already trying to do.

So one of the actions that came out -- and I believe this came out of the Coastal Technical Team -- is to promote the integration of climate change into the Coastal Zone Management Act flood plain plans and hazard mitigation plans. So those were - are some of the examples, strategies and actions that you would be seeing in the draft report.

So another thing that the management team has really taken to doing is this idea of engagement and collaboration in terms of identifying and engaging key stakeholders. They had asked the steering committee members to provide them with key stakeholders, especially those who are representative of other sectors, like, at least in our case, navigation, hydropower, you know, flood risk management, those kinds of things.

So the management team is reaching out to those other sector representatives just to make sure that they are aware of this effort. And so if there are any potentially conflicting issues, that those issues can be dealt with sooner rather than later.

So the management team has also developed a communications package. There's an interactive web site that you see here that anyone is welcome to go to. They have also started the government-to-government consultation with tribes. And one part of that was adding a tribal representative to the management team in addition to consulting with (DOI) regarding that consultation process and trying to plan regional workshops.

So, so far they've done quite a few things, including some of the stakeholder briefings, and trying to coordinate with other adaptation efforts, especially with the other Climate Change Adaption Interagency Task Force groups that are under CEQ. And they've offered the public the opportunity to come to at least the second steering committee meeting, and they have also submitted a Notice of Intent for public comment. And what you see in red are these additional times when the public can provide their input.

So here's the current timeline. It had changed somewhat from the original, but at least as of today this is the current timeline. So not too long ago - actually I guess about a month ago, a little bit less than a month ago, the steering committee met for a third time to review the draft of the strategy and to provide any concerns that they had to try and decide if there needed to be some formatting changes and, finally, to give their yea or nay about whether the draft was ready to go out for agency review.

So based on what the management team heard from the steering committee, there are some final revisions currently being done to make sure that the ecosystem-specific issues aren't lost in the strategy document.

So right now the plan is that that strategy document draft would be coming out for agency review in about a month. And so there's going to be about 30 days for all of you guys to provide comments on the agency review.

And the way it's going to work is that the - is that Chip Smith will be notifying the (RITS) about this strategy document and its availability for agency review. And the review, I guess, comment effort would be coordinated through the (RITS) to the divisions and districts. And then all those comments will be consolidated, sent to Chip Smith in the ASA's office and then forwarded to the management team.

And then after that the plan is to do whatever revisions are needed based on comments from the agency review and have a draft ready for public review by January. So this is - so far, this has been a very intense, accelerated effort. And I'm actually kind of amazed that it's gone as well as it has, just because there's been so many people involved and a number of issues that had to be dealt with. But we are pretty much on track. The only real delay has been getting this draft ready for agency review. So it's only really off by a month, which to me is pretty good.

So that's basically the overview of the strategy. And one of the questions that I had heard is, "Okay great. So we have this climate adaptation strategy, what does it really mean potentially for the Army Corps and for Civil Works planning?"

And really there are kind of two things. One is that the Corps, and really every agency involved, would determine for itself the priorities for implementing various actions within the strategy. And, you know, of course noting that not everyone is going to take, you know, take on every single action. That's really quite impossible. But at least where the actions and the strategy falls within - to our own respective mission areas, the steering committee felt fairly strongly that each agency should determine on its own what priorities would be for implementation.

And really the main thing is that hopefully this effort would really improve the coordination that we might have with the Fish and Wildlife Service or NOAA or the various state fish and wildlife agencies or tribes that we work with on climate adaptation strategies.

And one of the possible vehicles for this kind of coordination would be through the Landscape Conservation Cooperatives, which was - or rather is being led by the Fish and Wildlife Service, although it's really pretty much broadened to be a Department of Interior effort.

And so even within strategy, what you might see, especially under the Implementation section, is that the Landscape Conservation Cooperatives and the Department of Interior Climate Science Centers would actually try and work with its partners -- and the --Corps would be one of its partners -- to develop regional climate change adaptation plans that would reflect and reconcile the strategies and actions that are outlined in this national adaptation strategy.

Julie Marcy: And Janet, this is Julie. Could you tell us a little bit more about what these Landscape Conservation Cooperatives are currently doing, for folks who might not be familiar with them?

Janet Cushing: Sure. Basically the purpose of the Landscape Conservation Cooperatives is to provide a venue for the Fish and Wildlife Service and its partners to really collaborate more effectively and to coordinate efforts on things dealing with fish and wildlife.

And so for example there are some - and these Landscape Conservation Cooperatives, I should say - they're not all up and running. They are being put

up online pretty much one at a time. And the thought is that the Landscape Conservation Cooperatives would invite people from the Corps as well as from state agencies, from the tribes, from other federal agencies, and they would work on - together on particular issues.

So let's say the - one of the districts had an ecosystem restoration project, especially one that's fairly sizeable. And I'll just - for hypothetical purposes, I'll just use Missouri River as an example.

So given the large area, the Landscape Conservation Cooperative would help to get folks to the table and kind of put out what the concerns or issues are of the different partner agencies and work at facilitating those issues, work to get the climate change information or any type of fish and wildlife information, you know, from the Climate Science Centers or from the USGS or some other science agency and bring it in and help its partners to use that information.

So that's kind of the purpose of the Landscape Conservation Cooperatives.

Julie Marcy: Great. Thank you.

Janet Cushing: Sure. And the other aspect of what it might mean for the Corps is that we might take those - again those strategy and actions that fall within our mission areas and incorporate them into our own agency adaptation plans that are being developed.

And each federal agency has to provide an adaptation plan under Executive Order 13514 Q - CEQ and OMB. And so the thought is that even with updates of the various agency adaptation plans, agencies can pull these strategies and actions that have already been developed by this very large, coordinated effort and incorporate those appropriate elements into their own adaptation plans.

And just to make sure that there is some following of progress, the steering committee is likely to meet on a quarterly basis. You know, that regularity might change, but it would meet on a fairly regular basis to evaluate the implementation of the strategy and potentially report to QEC, potentially report to OMB, on an annual basis as far as its own implementation efforts.

And so, you know, those are just a couple of the ways that this strategy might influence how we do planning. There are I think some very well thought-out actions that planners might be able to use when they are formulating for ecosystem restoration, and especially in light of climate change, in terms of pooling or at least considering some of the actions.

And given that state fish and wildlife agencies as well as tribal agencies and other federal agencies will have seen this strategy, the thought is that this would allow for potentially a smoother plan formulation and alternative evaluation for ecosystem restoration projects as well as hopefully a smoother consultation with Fish and Wildlife Service and NOAA on such issues like the Endangered Species Act or the Magnuson-Stevens Fisheries Act, you know, those kinds of consultation things as well.

So I just wanted to put this out again. And I believe those of you who are seeing this or even for folks who aren't able to be on this particular call, can always pull up this presentation and access the Web site for the strategy.

And, you know, again, I just wanted to make sure that this overview is out there, and I really encourage you that once this strategy does come out for agency review, this is really a very good time to take a look at it, provide your comments.

I know Chip Smith is very eager to hear from the field about the potential concerns that we might have as an agency about any of the strategies or actions or in support of them as well.

So really - and even the folks on the management team have stressed this all along is that this strategy is really considered to be a beginning for how to adapt to climate change, to help conserve fish and wildlife and plant resources.

And especially since climate change and adaption science is expanding rapidly, and there's really new information coming out almost daily, this strategy is also likely to change and is also likely to go through an update every five years.

That least what - the purpose was for the strategy was really to identify the major strategies and develop at least a fairly common blueprint that we could all use for meaningful adaptation response.

So that's pretty much it. I think I will end here. And I would be happy to take any questions.

Julie Marcy: And remember to take your phone off of mute if you're on mute, so you can ask a question. Or you can use the chat feature, as you prefer.

Janet, while folks are thinking of other questions, I found it really encouraging that from your observations of the folks working on this strategy, there does seem to be a concerted effort to try to smooth the coordination efforts between agencies.

I know that can often be a stumbling block for us, as we run into regional office or area office differences in trying to coordinate on projects. So from what you're seeing, there seems to be a real concerted effort to try to deploy this strategy across the agency so that everyone's on the same sheet of music?

Janet Cushing: Yes it really has been very encouraging. And even though there are some sticking points like regarding the Endangered Species Act, the folks that have been involved have really tried to work very hard to discuss some of the implications of climate change, even on aspects of consultation.

And really it was some of the folks in the Fish and Wildlife Service that deal with ESA consultation that have said, "You know, we might have to encourage folks to take a look at the ESA and try and see if modifications to that are really necessary to allow the flexibility to make smart climate adaptation decisions."

Because right now, some of the folks in - at Fish and Wildlife Service feel pretty hamstrung about the consultation process and that the way the law is now makes it actually sometimes difficult to do the right thing in terms of climate change adaptation and allowing species to migrate. END