



Climate Change and the Alaska Region

Background: The Forest Service mission is to sustain ecosystem health, diversity, and productivity to meet the needs of present and future generations. Climate change will amplify the already difficult task of managing national forests for multiple goals. Broad policy guidance for addressing the impacts of climate change on national forest resources can be found in Presidential Executive Orders, Department of Agriculture Strategic Direction, and Forest Service Regulation and Policy.

Alaska Region Actions on Climate Change:

Climate Change Performance Scorecard – Every national forest conducts an annual evaluation of its performance on ten climate change and sustainable operation metrics (elements). In fiscal year 2013, the Tongass NF successfully accomplished five of ten elements and the Chugach NF accomplished six of ten elements.

Forest Service Research – Forest Service research (primarily through the Pacific Northwest Research Station) is conducting a wide variety of climate-related science throughout Alaska. Social scientists are investigating the effect of climate change on subsistence foods; forestry research is examining how a changing climate impacts forest health and individual species such as yellow cedar; fisheries scientists are exploring the means by which climate change is altering the life cycle of salmon; and bird biologists are documenting changes in annual migration patterns and timing.

Land Management Planning – Forest Service land management planning regulations (36 CFR 219) requires national forests and grasslands to “emphasize restoration of natural resources to make our ... lands more resilient to climate change, protect water resources, and improve forest health.” The planning rule further requires national forests to assess the vulnerability of key resources to environmental changes and to monitor the effects of climate change.

Climate Change Vulnerability Assessments – Both the Chugach and Tongass NFs are currently conducting climate change vulnerability assessments. The Chugach NF is conducting an assessment focused on effects to recreation resources in conjunction with its Forest Plan revision. The ongoing Tongass NF climate vulnerability assessment is focused on ice, water, and fisheries resources.

Education – The Alaska Region participates with governmental and non-governmental organizations to disseminate information demonstrating how the Forest Service is working with others to address climate change related resource issues. The Alaska Region is a national leader in climate change education delivered to youth and international audiences.

Partnerships – The Alaska Region has engaged in wide range of partnerships to share information, resources, and capacity to address climate change issues, including:

- CCTHITA
- State of Alaska
- University of Alaska
- Department of the Interior Agencies
- Pacific Northwest Research Station
- Alaska Coastal Rainforest Center
- Defenders of Wildlife
- Eco-Adapt

For More Information, contact Wayne Owen, Alaska Region Director of Wildlife, Fisheries, Ecology, Watershed, and Subsistence Management at wowen@fs.fed.us or (907) 586-7916.