

United States Must Take Steps to Adapt to Climate Change, Report States

WASHINGTON, D.C. – A group of scientists, policymakers, and regional leaders unveiled a new report today about national and regional preparations for adapting to a changing climate. The report, based on the National Climate Adaptation Summit, was presented to the President’s Science and Technology Advisor, Dr. John P. Holdren, at the American Association for the Advancement of Science in Washington, D.C. The Summit was convened by the University Corporation for Atmospheric Research in May 2010 as a result of a conversation between the UCAR Board of Trustees and Dr. Holdren.

The Summit report states that the United States must adapt to a changing climate now and prepare for increasing impacts on urban infrastructure, food, water, human health, and ecosystems in the coming decades (see web link below). It urges local, regional, and federal decision makers to develop and coordinate climate change adaptation measures across these scales of government and with the private sector. Measures that increase resilience to climate change can include changes in technology, management practices, or institutions. The report also states that proactive adaptation planning can help minimize negative impacts of climate change on our Nation’s communities, businesses, ecosystems, and citizens. The Federal Government must help to set priorities and share information about relevant programs and best practices.

The report identifies seven priorities for near-term action:

1. **Developing an overarching national strategy to guide federal climate change adaptation programs.** This strategy should establish agency roles, clear goals and metrics, and better mechanisms for coordinating federal and non-federal activities.
2. **Improving coordination of federal plans and programs.** Strong management from the executive branch is needed to break down barriers, integrate planning, move funding into the highest priority areas, and maintain priorities across the multitude of involved agencies.
3. **Creating a federal climate information portal.** This would provide single-point access to data from all relevant federal agencies and programs and would evolve over time into a more “national” portal with information about relevant non-federal efforts.
4. **Creating a clearinghouse of best practices and toolkits for adaptation.** Such an effort could assist regions and sectors with similar adaptation challenges in learning from each other and explore the intersection of adaptation and mitigation.
5. **Including support for assessment in U.S. Global Change Research Program agency budgets.** This would enable the regular national-scale assessments of climate change impacts that are required by law.
6. **Increasing funding for research on vulnerability and impacts, including economic analyses and pilot projects that join local, state, and regional governments and academic institutions to develop and test adaptation measures and tools.**

7. **Initiating a regional series of ongoing climate adaptation forums.** The goal would be to integrate planning, communication, and coordination of activities across various agencies and U.S. regions.

“The UCAR community has taken a close look at how our nation can become more resilient to climate change and what tools and workforce are needed to tackle these complex environmental, economic, and societal challenges. The Summit allowed us to broaden and deepen that conversation to include federal, regional, and local stakeholders,” stated Jack Fellows, UCAR Vice President.

Rosina Bierbaum, former UCAR Board Member and Dean of the School of Natural Resources and Environment at the University of Michigan, added: “Wise adaptation measures can protect our citizens, communities, and ecosystems from many negative consequences of climate change. But we need to act now. Some local adaptation efforts are more advanced than federal efforts. Thus, we all need to learn from one another, agree to a national strategy, and share and develop authoritative tools, information, and best practices.”

“I thank both UCAR and the Summit participants for sharing their expertise and insights in this report,” Dr. Holdren said “It is most timely and will be very helpful as our federal agencies draft a new 10-year Research Plan for Global Change and begin the next National Climate Assessment, both of which will give new emphasis to adaptation measures.”

As part of today’s event a panel of stakeholders that attended the May Summit provided brief comments about their local climate adaptation efforts and how the report’s findings will help them move forward into the future. Those panelists were:

- Dr. Jerry Melillo, Senior Scientist, the Ecosystem Center, Marine Biological Laboratory
- Mr. Frank Nutter, President, Reinsurance Association of America
- Dr. David Evans, Director, Center for Sustainability: Earth, Energy & Climate, Noblis, Inc.
- Ms. Joyce Coffee, Director of Project Development, Policy, and Research, Chicago Department of Environment

Event Webcast and Report: Information and webcasts about the Summit, the Summit report and this event can be found at: <http://www.joss.ucar.edu/events/2010/ncas/index.html>

NCAR/UCAR Media Relations Contacts:

David Hosansky, 303-497-8611 hosansky@ucar.edu

Rachael Drummond, 303-497-8604 rachaeld@ucar.edu

Resources for journalists: find experts, visuals, and more: www.ucar.edu/news

UCAR: UCAR is a consortium of over 100 universities with weather- and climate-related research and education programs. UCAR operates the National Center for Atmospheric Research under primary sponsorship by the National Science Foundation. Opinions, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this release do not necessarily reflect the views of the National Science Foundation. www.ucar.edu