



Recommendations on Adapting to the Challenge

USCAP stated in our *Call for Action* and the *Blueprint for Legislative Action* that one critical component of climate legislation is to provide support for adaptation to inevitable climate change, in both domestic and international contexts. As Congress debates climate legislation in the United States, a financial commitment to funding adaptation is a critical component for five reasons:

- 1. There is growing recognition that communities are already facing impacts from climate change.** The types of impacts predicted – coastal erosion in Alaska, droughts in the South Central U.S. and the African Sahel, loss of forests to beetle infestations in the Rockies, and increasing coastal vulnerability to storm surge in the U.S. Gulf Coast and South Asia are already being experienced. Resources are needed now to begin planning to manage the implications of these effects.
- 2. Adaptation funding is national security funding.** Providing adaptation funding now can prevent instability in the developing world that could come as the climate changes, such as increased migration and disputes over increasingly scarce resources. It is in the long-term security interests of the United States to protect vulnerable populations against the cascade of natural disasters that occur as a result of climate change – crop failures, famine and disease – that will spark conflict in unstable countries and create failed states that can harbor terrorists.
- 3. A commitment to adaptation in a U.S. climate bill is a critical component in reasserting US leadership in international negotiations.** Just as the United States won't act on a global deal without commitments from other major emitting countries, the global community is looking for a signal that the United States is serious about climate change. The U.S. will need to follow up on its commitment in Bali in 2007 to develop a finance package that funds adaptation, clean technology and mitigation efforts such as protecting forests in developing countries if it is to be assured of a deal in which developing countries also reduce their emissions.
- 4. The poorest people around the world are those most at risk.** The poorest countries— those that have contributed least to the causes of global warming – are most vulnerable to climate change, and are likely to face its harshest effects. Many of these people rely on vulnerable natural ecosystems for survival. International adaptation funding should be directed to the most vulnerable countries and communities globally.

5. Ecosystems and ecosystem services upon which human and natural communities depend must be protected. Our economies and communities are dependent on the natural systems that provide freshwater, fish, timber and agricultural productivity. Investing in ecosystem resilience and restoration is an essential component of avoiding famine, species extinction and other high-cost impacts of climate change.

Domestic

Domestic adaptation needs cannot be underestimated. On a national basis, funding natural resource adaptation in U.S. climate legislation should be significant and increase over time as the effects of an already warming world become more severe. A variety of actions are available to resource managers to reduce the risk of adverse environmental outcomes through activities that increase the resilience of ecological systems to climate change.¹ Analysis by TNC and others² suggests that the near term costs associated with safeguarding coastal and marine areas and managing fish and wildlife resources alone, through various federal programs, may cost up to \$4 billion more than current annual funding levels, whereas these programs represent a small percent of the total U.S. natural resource management budget. Individually and collectively, it is clear that the magnitude of the natural resources adaptation challenge dwarfs available resources.

International

Climate change will have devastating impacts on the most vulnerable populations in the most underdeveloped parts of the world, where governance is already weak. If unchecked, these changes will have serious impacts on the poor, with implications for community and national stability, the viability of natural systems on which these countries depend, and, because the U.S. is increasingly called in to provide relief, U.S. national and economic security.

A bi-partisan group of 32 retired admirals and generals, and former Senators, Secretaries of State and Defense and national security advisors recently came together to advise that “we must also help less developed countries adapt to the realities and consequences of a drastically changed climate. Doing so now will help avoid humanitarian disasters and political instability in the future that could ultimately threaten the security of the U.S. and our allies.”³

The UN estimates that the cost of climate adaptation in developing countries will be between \$27 billion and \$66 billion annually by 2030; some analysts believe this is understated. The European Commission recently proposed that the EU will need to contribute 2 to 3 billion Euros in the next few years, increasing to between 10 and 24 billion Euros per year by 2020.

1 Julius, S.H., J.M. West, G.M. Blate, J.S. Baron, B. Griffith, L.A. Joyce, P. Kareiva, B.D. Keller, M.A. Palmer, C.H. Peterson, and J.M. Scott (2008). *Preliminary review of adaptation options for climate-sensitive ecosystems and resources*. pp. 1-1 to 1-6.

2 Natural Resources Program Review of Adaptation Cost Increases (2009). The Nature Conservancy. Available from The Nature Conservancy Worldwide Office, Climate Change Program.

3 Climate Change Threatens All Americans We Must Work Together on an American Strategy. Release (9/8/09) at <http://www.psaonline.org/downloads/Climate.pdf>

Summary

Adaptation funding should be included in any climate and energy bill. The American Clean Energy and Security Act would fund domestic and international adaptation by providing 1% of the allowance value for each of these objectives, increasing over time to 4% in the late 2020s. This level of funding from a U.S. cap and trade program alone will be insufficient to address the scale of the challenges in the U.S and abroad – adaptation efforts require a global approach and a variety of financing and support mechanisms. Adaptation support can capitalize on the new market potential in developing countries as new technologies are deployed and approaches to adapting to a new climate profile are developed. The international commitment in U.S. climate policy is significantly lower than the international community’s expectations, based on an assessment of U.S. historic responsibility for CO₂ already in the atmosphere and the historical U.S. share in contributing to international efforts. U.S. legislation needs to provide a predictable trajectory of funding to assure stable investment levels and certainty of investment in affected regions domestically and internationally.