



National Climate Assessment Background and Talking Points

The release of the draft National Climate Assessment provides an excellent opportunity to engage the American public about U.S. climate impacts and solutions.

Background

The Third National Climate Assessment (NCA) will be released on May 6, 2014 by the White House. The assessment documents how climate change impacts regions and sectors across the United States, and how society is responding to climate change. The draft of the assessment, released in early 2013, gives a preview of the content and is available at <http://ncadac.globalchange.gov/>.

The Global Change Research Act of 1990 requires that a report must be presented to the President and the Congress every four years that gives a thorough overview of the status of climate science and climate change's widespread impacts. The National Climate Assessment (NCA) is conducted to meet this requirement.

The U.S. Global Change Research Program (USGCRP) coordinates the assessment, but the National Climate Assessment Development Advisory Committee (NCADAC) is charged with producing the assessment. The NCADAC is a 60-member federal advisory committee made up of notable scientists, business leaders, and other experts.

USGCRP is also mandated by the Global Change Research Act of 1990, integrates federal research on changes in the global environment and their implications for society, and coordinates the assessment. USGCRP coordinates climate research from 13 federal agencies including the Department of Defense, The Department of Energy, NASA and more.

The last USGCRP-led assessment, [*Global Climate Change Impacts in the United States*](#), was completed in 2009 and was a widely used resource; however, the 2014 assessment is expected to be higher profile and more comprehensive.

Talking Points

The talking points listed below are based on what we expect the assessment to say based on the draft and recent science. It is important to note that the assessment will have **a set of key findings** (the draft key findings are available on page 6 here <http://ncadac.globalchange.gov/download/NCAJan11-2013-publicreviewdraft-chap1-execsум.pdf>) that communicators may want to highlight in their own talking points.

On the report's findings and implications:

- **Climate change is not just a problem for the future - it has moved firmly into the present.**
- **Many Americans are already feeling the effects of increases in certain types of extreme weather and sea level rise that are fueled by climate change.**
- **This Assessment is the most comprehensive analysis to date of how climate change is affecting our nation now and is projected to affect it in the future.**
- **America has important opportunities to reduce emissions of heat-trapping gases and prepare for the effects of climate change.**
- Climate change is occurring more rapidly than previously expected.
- These findings reflect the influence of climate change on the extreme weather we're seeing in the United States and reveal how drought, flooding, and extreme storms will increase even further if carbon pollution is not controlled.
- The costs of climate change are already high and will increase substantially if emissions are not controlled.
- The assessment finds that climate change will strain our energy and water supplies and infrastructure.
- The assessment also finds that climate change threatens Americans' health.
- The assessment's findings are dire, but it also finds that we're beginning to take positive steps to reduce the effects of climate change and prepare for a changed world.
- But it cautions that emissions are continuing unchecked (higher than even the highest emissions scenario used to make projections in this assessment) and much more needs to be done.

- The good news is that we have solutions to climate change: we have the tools right now to build a clean energy system to address this threat. We can also begin building stronger cities and towns that will be resilient in the face of future extreme weather.

On the NCA process:

- The NCA findings are developed by the National Climate Assessment Development Advisory Committee (NCADAC), a 60-member federal advisory committee made up of notable scientists, business leaders, and other experts.
- The content of the assessment is written by nearly 300 scientists and other experts from academia; local, state, and federal government; the private sector; and the non-profit sector.
- The NCA is consensus document that has gone through extensive expert and public review, including from the National Academy of Sciences.
- Representatives from both oil companies and environmental groups agreed to the assessment's findings.
- While the assessment is being released by the Obama Administration, what Congress and the Administration do as a result of the assessment is not part of the NCA process.
- Hundreds of meetings and workshops have been either conducted or attended by NCA staff over the last four years to discuss the assessment.
- The assessment had a public review period, where thousands of comments on the draft were considered. Authors' responses will be published online.
- Both the recently released IPCC report and the National Climate Assessment represent a consensus view of climate science, but the NCA goes into greater detail on climate impacts in regions of the United States, as well as interactions between climate and extreme weather in those regions.

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