Welcome to the first edition of Engaging a Climate Ready Agency, an update brought to you by the Climate Change Advisor's office. Dave Cleaves was recently named by the Chief as the Forest Service's lead executive on climate change. Dave will lead agency efforts to manage forests and watersheds in the face of climate change, represent the agency in climate change matters with our partners, and coordinate climate change activities and communication within the agency.

MESSAGE FROM DAVE

This update

The purpose of this update is to help us keep our eyes on the prize of healthy, functioning systems – ecological, social, and economic – as the climate around them changes. All over the Forest Service, people are trying new things to prepare for a changing climate and learning as they do. We need to exchange those lessons learned and use them to adjust our land management and scientific assumptions and practices. As we get our climate-legs under us, we will learn to balance today's demands with preparing for future needs. That means efficiently recognizing and fully exchanging the feedback from our successes and failures and pulling in the lessons of other organizations to consider for our own dynamic strategies.

We are unfolding a forest-scale, active national effort to bring climate change knowledge into our organizational expectations and actions. We will try to enhance the connection between the field, the Deputy Areas, and the Chief's office on climate change and landscape-scale conservation issues. We will have to be creative and thinking outside the box.

Climate change and its implications for forests may be the biggest environmental challenge the Forest Service has ever faced. Are we ready?

The projected changes may seem to be out in a distant future, but they are really not that far off. Some of us have been in a land management career for almost half of that. The newest employees in the Forest Service will experience the extreme changes for much, if not all, of their careers. What will we be ready to do today's Forest Service workforce do with us?

I think that we can and we must. We have a lot going for us: land management, science, and landowner services under one roof; a range of legal authorities for a spectrum of interventions in the name of forest ecosystems; intimate knowledge of the land through experience and science-based resource assessments; strong partnerships with other agencies, local communities, and the spirit de corps that, despite rocky periods, has been the envy of many government agencies.

We are the long-view people. The legacy of our decisions will be played out in the forests and grasslands of tomorrow. That legacy builds on what we are doing now, but it builds in the new science, the managerial and technical innovations, and the lessons that we will develop on what will be a winding and, at times, confusing pathway through the next several decades.

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Chequamegon–Nicolet National Forest Climate Change Assessment and Response

The Northern Institute of Applied Carbon Science, R9, NRS, NA, and Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest (CNNF) have worked closely with universities, the Wisconsin Initiative on Climate Change Impacts, and Wisconsin DNR to create climate change vulnerability and mitigation assessments for northern Wisconsin and the CNNF. They are also developing linked response frameworks for the Forest and its neighbors. A Shared Landscapes Workshop (65 participants) and Science Applications Workshop (58 participants) helped inform the process. Planning is underway with multiple organizations to create linked assessments and frameworks throughout the upper Midwest. To see the presentations from the Science Applications and Needs Workshop on April 27-28, 2010, check this link out: http://www.nrs.fs.fed.us/niacs/tools/ccrf/

FROM THE WASHINGTON OFFICE

FS Strategy and Implementation Plan for Responding to Climate Change

The FS Strategic Framework for Responding to Climate Change (2008) is the foundation for integrating climate change into our agency’s programs, policies, practices, and partnerships and is the basis for a new climate change implementation plan that is currently in development. The implementation plan will set priorities, guide collaborative response efforts, and be integrated with the Secretary’s “all-lands” vision for America’s forests.

RECOMMENDED READING

America’s Climate Choices
The National Academies

“A strong, credible body of scientific evidence shows that climate change is occurring, is caused largely by human activities, and poses significant risks for a broad range of human and natural systems.” Read more . . . articles attached.

A Synthesis of the Science on Forests and Carbon for U.S. Forests
Michael G. Ryan, et al.

“Forests play an important role in the U.S. and global carbon cycle, and carbon sequestered by U.S. forest growth and harvested wood products currently offsets 12-19% of U.S. fossil fuel emissions. The cycle of forest growth, death, and regeneration and the use of wood removed from the forest complicate efforts to understand and measure forest carbon pools and flows. Our report explains these processes and examines the science behind mechanisms proposed for increasing the amount of carbon stored in forests and using wood to offset fossil fuel use. We also examine the tradeoffs, costs, and benefits associated with each mechanism and explain how forest carbon is measured.” Read more . . . follow this link.

LINKS

Climate Change Resource Center
The Forest Service Climate Change Resource Center provides information and tools to address climate change in planning and project implementation. Start with the Climate Change Primer to learn more about climate change science and potential impacts.

UPDATE SUBMISSIONS
Please send your submissions on FS climate change related activities to Cathy Dowd: cdowd@fs.fed.us