National Fish and Wildlife Climate Adaptation Listening Sessions and other outreach

March – October 2010

March 24: North American Wildlife and Natural Resources Conference, Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Listening Session panel: Michael Hutchins - Moderator (The Wildlife Society); Dan Ashe (US Fish & Wildlife Service), Sue Haseltine (US Geological Survey), Scott Yaich (Ducks Unlimited), Patty Riexinger (State of NY), David Cleaves (US Forest Service), John Kostyack (National Wildlife Federation)

April 26: Northeast Assoc. of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, Newton, Massachusetts, (Remarks during plenary by Dan Ashe (US Fish & Wildlife Service), John Kostyack (National Wildlife Federation), Patty Riexinger (State of NY), Wayne MacCallum (State of MA). Printed materials distributed at exhibit.

April 27: DOI Conference on the Environment, Portland, Oregon. Listening Session panel: Robyn Thorson - Moderator (US Fish & Wildlife Service), Rowan Gould (US Fish & Wildlife Service), Leslie Dierauf (US Geological Survey), Dan Lechefsky (Bureau of Land Management), and Noah Matson (Defenders of Wildlife)

April 28: USFWS/NWF Safeguarding Wildlife from Climate Change Webinar series - Listening session panel: Dan Ashe (USFWS), Michael Hutchins (The Wildlife Society), John Kostyack (National Wildlife Federation)

June 3-6: Native American Fish and Wildlife Society. Brief remarks during plenary by Charlie Wooley (USFWS) and John Vitello (Bureau Indian Affairs). Printed materials distributed from exhibit.

June 28-30: Midwest Assoc. of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, Indianapolis. Brief remarks during plenary by David Schad (AFWA). Printed materials distributed.

July 7: Society for Conservation Biology, Edmonton, Canada. Listening Session panel: Michael Hutchins – Moderator (The Wildlife Society), Alan Thornhill (Bureau of Ocean Energy Management), Sue Haseltine (US Geological Survey), Patty Riexinger (State of NY), Kirsten Leon (National Park Service), Josh Lawler (Univ. of WA).

July 17: Western AFWA, Anchorage, Alaska - Listening Session panel: Geoff Haskett –Moderator (US Fish & Wildlife Service), Sue Haseltine (US Geological Survey), John McCamman (State of CA), Doug Vincent-Lang (Alaska Fish & Game), Leslie Holland-Bartels (US Geological Survey), Steve Belinda (Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership).

August 1-6: Ecological Society of America, Pittsburg, PA. Printed materials distributed at exhibit – Mark Shaffer (US Fish & Wildlife Service).

September 16: American Fisheries Society, Pittsburg, PA. Listening session panel: Bryan Arroyo – Moderator (US Fish & Wildlife Service), Roger Griffis (NOAA), Patty Riexinger (State of NY), Tom Bigford (American Fisheries Society), and Doug Austen (US Fish & Wildlife Service).

September 28: 100th Annual meeting AFWA, Grand Rapids, MI. Listening session panel: Mark Shaffer – Moderator (US Fish & Wildlife Service), Roger Griffis (NOAA), Anne Kinsinger (US Geological Survey), Doug Austen (US Fish & Wildlife Service), Noah Matson (Defenders of Wildlife), Kurt Johnson (US Fish & Wildlife Service).

October 4: The Wildlife Society Annual Meeting, Snowbird, Utah. Listening session panel: Michael Hutchins – Moderator (The Wildlife Society), Kurt Johnson (US Fish & Wildlife Service), Robin O'Malley (US Geological Survey), Noah Matson (Defenders of Wildlife), Doug Parsons (State of FL), Jennifer Lee (National Park Service)

October 19: Southeast AFWA meeting, Biloxi, Mississippi. Listening session panel: Gabriella Chavarria (US Fish & Wildlife Service), Cindy Dohner (US Fish & Wildlife Service), Sonja Jones (US Geological Survey), Tom Moorman (Ducks Unlimited), Doug Parsons (State of FL), Greg Wathen (State of TN).

NATIONAL FISH, WILDLIFE AND PLANTS CLIMATE ADAPTATION STRATEGY
MAJOR MESSAGES FROM LISTENING SESSIONS:

Timing

- We need an adaptation strategy today. Decisions are being made on-the-ground now that will affect our ability to design adaptation strategies. Two years may be too long. For example, we are losing a lot of the flexibility we will need to respond to CC just with continued habitat fragmentation. We need some short-term strategies soon.
- On the other hand, it's recognized that collaboration takes time. We will need to find the balance between moving too slow and making people wait (and missing opportunity) and moving too fast and leaving people behind.

Resources/Capacity

- Concern about capacity/resources/political will for implementation and carrying out the actions.
- How will actions be stepped down? How to lead to real change vs. just sit on a shelf? Who will pay for this and where will it live? How will resources and information be shared?
- We are ALL too busy now. Specifically, States governments don't have the resources to engage with all collaboration needed already. States are currently being asked to work with the LCC's (and some are dealing with 3 LCC's), modify their SWAP's, and now also provide input to this strategy. There is a lot going on at several different levels in the same time frame. Resources (financial and human) are needed ASAP.
- The problem isn't just about money. There are problems with State regulations and contracting rules that provide barriers to sharing resources and capacities.

Process

- What are the next steps? Who is responsible for keeping it current? Who sets the priorities?
- The strategy should focus first on fish and wildlife first - then integrate with other sectors. That said, we need to work in parallel with other sectors so we can avoid bad outcomes. Specifically, we don't want to find that a different sector's adaptation strategies may cancel ours out (i.e., fish and wildlife habitat needs vs. expanding agricultural needs).
- How will conflicts emerging between state and regional scales, social and economic issues, and regulatory barriers be addressed?
- How will LCC's and regional climate centers act as a network?

Communication

- We need a common vocabulary. Terms like "adaptation" should be clearly understood.
- The strategy should be understood and easily scaled to local issues. It should also be expressed in terms that people understand.
- Importance of meaningful engagement with the public including private landholders, and need to include private lands as a key component of the Strategy.
- Concern about the lack of public buy-in/support and understanding/belief in climate change, and need for investment in training and capacity building, especially at local level. The strategy should address how to engage those who don't want to be involved.
- It should also address how can we motivate our own agency staffs? In-reach.
- The strategy should embrace new ways of communicating – use social media.

Participation

- The Federal family needs to work together as never before. We have not yet engaged all the Federal agencies that should be involved. Specifically, agencies representing the oceans, private landowners, Tribes, USDA, Water Management Agencies, Defense, Transportation, private industry (i.e., oil and gas developers) must be invited to participate.
- State agencies will need our support to actively engage.
- We should include our International partners. Specifically – Canada and Mexico.
- Non-traditional partners may also be needed (i.e., zoos, aquariums)
- We must get the next generation involved. We will need the full support of today's youth in developing the long term strategy so they will own it after we all retire.

Strategy

- The strategy must be a National not Federal strategy.
- Clarify roles/responsibilities and improve communication of relevant agencies, organizations, and states. Need to step down the Strategy to the state and local level without being so prescriptive that it confines unique local needs. Try to avoid a too "top down" approach.
- It should be "scalable" to different landscapes and flexible in its implementation.
- Need for guidance on types of adaptation strategies (resistance, resilience, facilitation) as well as decision-support tools that can assist planning efforts. What are the methods that can be applied?
- Need for/clarification of prioritization (identifying winners and losers, triage, etc.). Acknowledge that we can't save everything, identify what is actually feasible to accomplish/maintain: when will our intervention make a difference and when to give up?
- The strategy should identify new conservation tools, terminologies, and concepts. New approaches such as Vulnerability Assessments, leasing land instead of acquiring it should be included.
- We should rethinking terminologies like adaptation, restoration, non-natives and exotics to see if they will work in the changing landscapes anticipated. Explore new concepts such as range shifting and assisted migration. Best practices are needed.
- Need to consider other critical resource issues and stressors/threats including habitat fragmentation, overdevelopment, population declines, and flooding. Need to incorporate traditional conservation management into climate adaptation (address non-climate stressors). However, the strategy should ensure that we are not just relabeling traditional conservation approaches to conservation. Many will remain valid but will need to be broadened to be effective.
- Need to consider modifying regulations, rethink existing policies, and reconsider institutional programs. May need to modify existing laws/regulations that are inconsistent adaptation goals/strategy.
- Include impacts to particular species of concern while moving toward broader habitat/system goals rather than a single-species focus. Include importance of ecosystem processes and services.
- Need to consider built environment/human dimension, as well as cultural and tribal resources.
- Clarification of time-scale: multiple time-scales? 50-years? Shorter timeframes (10-20) as well?
- Clarification of a common set of future scenarios/predictions that should be planned against.
- Consider issues of disease, pests, and species and system health.