



National Leadership Summits For a Sustainable America

Natural Resource Stewardship and Climate Change Action Items

Water Resources

Action 1: Establish an independent, non-governmental Commission on Water Resources and Climate Change to address 4 major areas: Water Supply, Use, and Quality; Public Health and Safety; Ecosystem Impacts; and the Energy/Water Interface.

Leadership: Representatives from government, industry, academia to provide an independent mix of viewpoints and opinions

Suggested Activities/Milestones:

- Early 2007 – establish commission
- 2008 – complete draft report
- December 2008 – present report to incoming President

Action 2: Ensure that high-level U.S. Government officials participate in international forums / conferences (e.g. Kyoto Climate Summit, World Water Forum, etc.)

Leadership: President, with Executive Branch representation (e.g. State Department, EPA, USGS, etc.)

Suggested Activities/Milestones:

- Commit to participating in Presidential Climate Action Plan with ongoing representation

Action 3: Improve efficiency of water usage through EPA's Water Star program (recently-launched program similar to Energy Star)

Leadership: President, with involvement of EPA

Suggested Activities/Milestones:

- Presidential Climate Action Plan to endorse and promote Water Star program.

Action 4: Advance incentives for the use of permeable pavements, green roofs, and other green building approaches that contribute to water and energy conservation.

Leadership: President, through GSA for federal construction; Congress via tax breaks and other incentives; States; and local jurisdictions

Suggested Activities/Milestones:

- Presidential Climate Action Plan to endorse and promote incentives for green building approaches.

Action 5: Encourage the U.S. Geological Service to work with state water surveys to define high-risk flooding locations

Leadership: President, through USGS; state water surveys

Suggested Activities/Milestones:

- Presidential Climate Action Plan to endorse and promote USGS and state collaboration.

Action 6: Accelerate updating of FEMA floodplain maps

Leadership: President, through DHS/FEMA

Suggested Activities/Milestones:

- Presidential Climate Action Plan to endorse and promote acceleration of map updates.

Action 7: Develop energy policy in the context of water impacts, e.g. choosing energy sources that minimize water use and identifying win-win opportunities to advance CO2 emissions reductions and water conservation.

Leadership: President

Suggested Activities/Milestones:

- Publication of Presidential Climate Action Plan

Farmland and Forests

Action 8: Extend existing tax credits for permanent easements beyond 2008 to keep forested land forested.

Leadership: President, Congress

Action 9: Under the research title of the Farm Bill, launch new initiatives to:

1. Investigate methods for improving resilience and adaptation to the effects of climate change.
2. Explore emerging technologies in biofuels, including cellulose, with an emphasis on lowest possible life-cycle greenhouse gas emissions.
3. Analyze the impacts of changes in domestic subsidies on world markets and the correlating environmental impacts.
4. Determine the maximum extent to which forests and agricultural land can sequester carbon and identify practices which optimize sequestration.

Leadership: Congress

Suggestion Actions/Milestones: Include in Farm Bill Reauthorization in current Session

Action 10: Make carbon sequestration and greenhouse gas reductions more prominent parts of the farm bill. Suggestions:

1. Tie greenhouse gas performance to commodity subsidies similar to sod and swamp-busting prohibitions.
2. Encourage planting of trees on conservation resource lands.
3. Analyze life-cycle greenhouse gas emissions of different biofuels and encourage those with lowest levels.

Leadership: Congress

Suggestion Actions/Milestones: Include in Farm Bill Reauthorization in current Session

Action 11: Develop a revenue stream from ecosystem services (i.e. recreational fees, water quality improvements under nutrient trading, etc) to fund improvements in greenhouse gas emissions performance in forestry and agriculture. Steps to implementation:

1. Determine commodifiable ecosystem services and a system under which they can be bought and sold (some of these already exist).
2. Develop program for administration of this program to manage income and allocation of funds.

Leadership: Congress, Department of the Interior

Action 12: Create a crop insurance program to protect from crop losses those farmers who implement best management or innovative practices. Steps to implementation:

1. Develop list of practices to be considered under insurance program.
2. Investigate sources of funding for insurance.
3. Determine methods for evaluating effectiveness of new practices.

Leadership: Congress, US Department of Agriculture

Habitat and Biodiversity Action Items

Action 13: Direct all Federal agencies engaged in land management and biodiversity activities to protect, maintain, restore and value biodiversity and wildlife habitat while incorporating climate change mitigation and adaptation activities into their management and planning actions.

Leadership: President

Suggested Activities/Milestones: Executive Order. If issued by 44th President, do so in first 100 days

Action 14: Complete a national inventory of ecosystem services -- including valuation of those services for climate change, habitat and biodiversity issues -- to identify those resources most critical to human and ecosystem health and well-being. Suggestions:

1. Include map.
2. Look at how values are affected by climate change.
3. Note this as a tool to help identify our dependence on the natural world.

Leadership: Presidential Executive Order or Congressional action.

Action 15: Enact the most comprehensive environmental bill in history, the Natural Heritage and Environmental Security Act (NHESA). Its purpose would be:

To ensure healthy ecosystems that serve the needs of the American public for current and future generations, and foster a robust economic future by minimizing the impacts of climate change on biodiversity and natural resources through prevention, restoration, adaptation and mitigation strategies.

Provisions should include:

Title I: Research and Assessment

- A. Inventory (possible stand-alone)
- B. Baseline
- C. Impacts of climate change on humans and the “web of life.”
- D. Monitoring (measuring change)
- E. Institute a National Science Foundation (NSF) program.

Title II. Planning and Coordination

- A. Develop bio-regional plans for protecting and restoring key habitats identified in the inventory
- B. Establish regional mechanism for coordination modeled on former commission structure
- C. Inter-agency and inter-jurisdictional collaboration

Title III: Reporting

- A. Develop indicators
- B. Report on progress every 2 years
- C. Include auditing role on meeting standards

Title IV: Economic Framework

- A. Ecosystem reserve program
- B. Create economic incentives and financial instruments for preservation and restoration of key habitat on private lands
- C. Mitigation/sequestration banking
- D. National protocol (standards and policy) for Transferable Development Rights (TDRs)

Title V: Educational Communications and Eco-Literacy Campaign to boost public awareness, concern and actions to protect and restore biodiversity and natural resources.

- A. Model eco-literacy campaign undertaken in Costa Rica through school children
- B. Systems education
- C. No Child Left Inside
- D. What individuals can do

Title VI: Enforcement

Title VII: Authorization

Title VIII: Savings Clause (don't supersede other Acts)

Leadership: Congress or President's budget

Suggested Activities/Milestones: Include in Presidential Climate Action Plan. If not acted upon by Congress during current session, encourage 44th President to include this proposal in his/her first legislative package.

Action 16: Pass a cap and trade bill that includes a provision providing \$2 billion to protect natural heritage from the effects of climate change. Suggestions:

- A. Funding should be used for state and federal implementation.
- B. Auction off a portion of the allowances to generate revenue.

Leadership: Congress

Suggested Activities/Milestones: Amend cap and trade legislation likely to be considered by current Congress

Action 17: Direct that all Environmental Impact Statements (EIS's) and other federal natural resources planning shall take into account the contributions to and environmental impacts from climate change.

Leadership: Presidential Executive Order within 10 days of new Administration.

Action 18: Establish a National Commission on Taxes and Subsidies to:

- A. Evaluate taxes and subsidies that exacerbate global warming and its effects on biodiversity and habitats
- B. Recommend appropriate actions to align economic incentives with outcomes sought in NHESA (Action 15).

Leadership: President should establish and propose to Congress in his/her first legislative package. (Congress needs to authorize creation of the commission under the Federal Advisory Committee Act, or FACA)

Suggested Activities/Milestones: Include in Presidential Climate Action Plan. If not acted upon by Congress during current session, encourage 44th President to include this proposal in his/her first legislative package.

Questions addressed by the Sustainable Decision Making Group:

How do we 'score' options for addressing climate change? What existing scoring tools exist or what new scoring tools are needed to prioritize the new Administration's efforts? What criteria should all sectors of US society (gov, bus, investors, etc) use for prioritizing responses to climate change? What new collaborations are need to Identify, promote and implement the most sustainable approaches to climate change?

Making Sustainable Decisions

Action 19: Create a national-level system for tracking and reporting on progress towards a more sustainable social and economic system in the US. Developing the system will require:

1. A comprehensive framework and set of high-level/big picture/long-term measures that are readily understood and useable by all sectors of the US society for national decision-making.
2. Moving beyond traditional measures like the GDP to measures that reflect the interconnection of economic, social and environmental issues.
3. Focusing not solely on climate change but on understanding existing and future/proposed social, economic and environmental activities in the context of climate change
4. Understanding that creating the framework is a long-term process that will require the commitment of institutional capacity and resources.
5. Using existing or prior efforts to provide a foundation for this effort. These include: the Heinz Center Ecosystem project, the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, the Key National Indicators initiative, the Interagency Working Group on Sustainable Development Indicators, and the National Resource Roundtables.

Leadership: President, Congress, Business, NGOs

Action 20: Create tools or a system of tools for assessing and prioritizing programs, projects and activities that are proposed for addressing climate change, whether for mitigation, adaptation or alleviation purposes. These tools must:

1. Consider the full life-cycle of processes, materials and energy
2. Include as part of their framework a consideration of impacts on ecosystem services.
3. For programs, projects and activities being evaluated, the tools should take into account:
 - a. Feasibility - Scientific, Technological and Institutional/Infrastructural
 - b. Timing/Magnitude - how quickly will an option have an effect and how large an effect will it have
 - c. Time frame - need to consider a long-term horizon - 50-100 years when comparing short-term vs. long-term trade offs - need to seriously consider the long-term consequences of options
 - d. Compatibility with other goals - economic, foreign policy, national security
 - e. Flexibility, diversity, resilience
 - f. Equity (rich-poor, intergenerational)
 - g. Simplicity
 - h. Specific to ecosystems, the tools should consider:
 - i. location and extent of modification of ecosystems
 - ii. effect of these modifications on production of ecosystem “goods & services”
 - iii. effect of these modifications on ecosystem processes (nutrient cycling, soil formation, etc.)
 - iv. other valued characteristics of environment

4. Be useful for assessing efficiency measures, not just specific/new technologies.
5. Take into account and use/modify as practical, existing tools such as: Life-Cycle Analysis (LCA), Environmental impact assessments (NEPA), and Energy Return On Investment (EROI).

Leadership: President with involvement of federal agencies including but not limited to Departments of Agriculture, Commerce, Energy, Health, Housing, Interior, Transportation, and the Environmental Protection Agency; Congress; NGOs, Business