**The DOI Northeast Climate Science Center – Update and Summary, February 2, 2012**

**Background**. On March 11, 2009 DOI Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar released Secretarial Order 3285, (<http://www.doi.gov/whatwedo/climate/cop15/upload/SecOrder3289.pdf>), established the mission of the **USGS National Climate Change and Wildlife Science Center,** (NCCWSC), and the **Landscape Conservation Cooperatives** (LCCs). These two initiatives form the cornerstones of this integrated approach to climate-change science and adaptation. Each has a distinct science and resource-management role but also shares complementary capacities and capabilities. This strategy will serve the Department’s land, fish, wildlife, water, marine, tribal, and cultural heritage managers, as well as our Federal, State, local, Tribal, NGO, private landowner, and other stakeholder partners. The backbone of the NCCWSC are the eight regional Climate Science Centers (CSCs) which will provide a regional focus for climate change studies and bring together regional partners. Interior’s U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) is taking the lead in establishing the CSCs and providing initial staffing. Ultimately, funds and staff from multiple Interior bureaus will be pooled to support these Centers and ensure collaborative sharing of research results and data. The host institutions for the CSC was determined by a competitive process and in most cases the host institutions consist of a consortium of universities and other academic partners with the research capacity to compliment federal research and monitoring regarding climate change and other landscape-scale stressors and support LCCs and other partners.

**The DOI Northeast Climate Science Center (NECSC).** The final three Climate Science Centers were announced on October 7, 2011 and funding approved by Congress on December 16th, 2011. For the northeast, (an area that includes twenty-two states, from Maine to Minnesota and from Virginia to Missouri), the University of Massachusetts-Amherst will host the Northeast Climate Science Center and a consortium of seven institutions, including:

**University of Massachusetts Amherst** -- Richard Palmer (Lead PI)

**College of Menominee Nation** -- Melissa Cook (Lead PI)

**Columbia University** -- Radley Horton (Lead PI)

**Marine Biological Laboratory** -- Linda Deegan (Lead PI)

**University of Minnesota** -- Anthony W. D’Amato (Lead PI)

**University of Missouri Columbia** -- Frank R Thompson III (Lead PI)

**University of Wisconsin-Madison** -- Lewis Gilbert (Lead PI)

More detailed information on these partners and the consortium may be found on the web at:

**http://www.cns.umass.edu/neclimate/doi-csc.** The interim Director for the NECSC is Rachel Muir, Science Advisor for the USGS Northeast Area; she can be contacted at [rmuir@usgs.gov](mailto:rmuir@usgs.gov) or by phone 703-648-5114. A permanent director and additional USGS research and support personnel will be established at the University of Massachusetts later this year.

**Organization and Governance**. Through a cooperative agreement established between the USGS and the NECSC Consortium, funding to enhance our shared capacity for climate science research will be directed to the consortium members, chiefly to provide support for university personnel and graduate students whose time will be directed to research priorities for climate change in the Northeast and upper Midwest. An Advisory Council, representing the leadership of the principal partners for the region encompassed by the NECSC, will provide the strategic direction for the NE Consortium research activities and will be the decision-maker on funding for research and monitoring activities. The Council will be chaired by the USGS Area Executive. A second committee, a science and technical committee, (referred to as the Science Implementation Panel or SIP), will provide the science support to assist the Advisory Council in its decision-making. The mechanism for establishing the long-term and strategic direction for the Climate Science Center will be the development of a multi-year science planning document that will be revised annually as research and monitoring progresses and science needs of our partners are refined. The first completed Strategic Science Plan (for the Alaska Climate Science Center) and the operations of that Center, established in 2009 can be found at: <http://www.doi.gov/csc/alaska/science.cfm>.

**Current Tasks and Activities.** While funding is just now being released to establish the NECSC, the Federal budget cycle requires that a variety of activities be completed within this fiscal year, ending October 1, 2012. For this reason, the top priority activity for the NESCS is to develop a draft Strategic Science Plan. This plan needs to accurately reflect the science needs of the region and of the principal partners within the region, including the LCCs, States, Tribes and partnerships representing specific natural resource management needs, (Joint Ventures and Fish Habitat Partnerships for example). Development of the plan will be a “bottom-up” process that requires active outreach to our partners. Some partners have already developed science priorities that will speed up the process of developing the Science Plan. Outreach to other partners to assist them in identifying their climate change and land use priority research needs will be achieved through listening sessions, meetings and other communications, with the assistance of consortium members, LCCs and other partners to provide contacts and venues. Priority will be given to partners who represent the needs in the following sectors/habitats that are important to the region, including;

* Coastal and Marine Ecosystems (including the Great Lakes
* Urban Areas
* Forested and Forested Montane Ecosystems
* Freshwater Ecosystems (rivers, lakes and streams)
* Agro-ecosystems
* Prairie and Grassland Ecosystems

We will coordinate with LCCS and other Climate Science Centers to fully utilize their existing efforts to conduct outreach so as to avoid over-extending our resources for outreach and to avoid repetition with LCCs and other organizations.

A second activity is to establish an Advisory Council, its structure and governance. The National Center provides general guidance for development and operation of the Advisory Council. However, the size and the diverse interests represented in the NECSC region make the development of a truly representative Advisory Council of a manageable size a challenge. We will look to “partnerships of partnerships” such as the LCCs and State-based organizations such as the Northeast and Midwest Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies for guidance in this regard.

A third priority is committing research funds for fiscal year 2012 without these structures fully in place. Approximately $500,000 needed to be obligated by June 15th to meet agency budgetary timelines. There is not adequate time to establish a fully-fledged Request for Proposal process within those timelines and the Interim Director will need to work with existing partners, the NECSC Consortium and Federal research agencies to establish a transparent, efficient and effective mechanism for dedicating this funding.

Initial communication efforts, including established a USGS-based website and other communication mechanisms are needed.

An interim working committee is being assembled to address these tasks within the compressed timetable required. Input from our LCC partners is particularly valuable and has already been established. Participation and support in this interim working group is encouraged but will be limited to assure we can operate efficiently. Contact Rachel Muir for further information.