Corps Reform Network

Protecting and Restoring America's Rivers, Wetlands and Coasts

Corps Reform Network Resolution on Global Warming

According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), North America is projected to warm between 3.6 – 18 degrees F (2 – 10 degrees C) by 2100. The IPCC found with 90% certainty that global warming is caused by humans (IPCC, 2007). Since that time, no scientific body of national or international standing has disagreed. Despite efforts to curb greenhouse gas emissions, climate change is likely to occur in even the best-case scenarios, and negative impacts on the world's surface water systems are expected. According to the United States Environmental Protection Agency, the following climate change impacts on surface water systems are expected to occur:

In the Northeast:

- Coastal erosion, loss of wetland habitat, increased risk from storm surges from sea level rise;
- Increased vulnerability of infrastructure (e.g. dams, levees, dikes, roads and utilities) to extreme events such as coastal flooding.

In the Southeast and Gulf Coast:

- Increased coastal erosion including loss of barrier islands and wetlands;
- Sea level rise, storm surges and extreme precipitation events will place coastal zone developments at increased risk of flooding.

In the Midwest and Great Lakes:

- Lower lake and river water levels resulting from warmer temperatures and increased evaporation, will adversely impact recreation and shipping;
- Warming lake and river temperatures will lead to reductions in many fish stocks;
- Decreases in water quality will lead to habitat loss and eutrophication;
- Greater riverine flooding due to more frequent and heavy rain events.

In the Great Plains:

- Intensified springtime flood and summertime drought cycles.

In the West:

- Changes in natural ecosystems resulting from higher temperatures and possibly intensified winter precipitation;
- Earlier snowmelt and significant reduction in snowpack stressing some reservoir systems;
- Increased stress on groundwater systems leading to decreased recharge.

Alaska:

- Damage to infrastructure resulting from permafrost melting.

Given these imminent impacts on our water resources, it is critical that the Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) and other government agencies utilize non-structural approaches and environmental protection and restoration whenever practicable, to adapt to climate change impacts.

In consideration of the threats to our nation's water resources, it is imperative that we advocate for federal policies and local activities that will protect and enhance our water resources in a changing climate.

In order to assist Corps Reform Network members incorporate global warming considerations into their program work, the Corps Reform Network will work towards the following goals:

- Development of a campaign to achieve enactment of federal measures requiring the Corps and other federal agencies to utilize non-structural approaches and the best available science to ensure resiliency in the face of global warming impacts;
- Formation of a Global Warming Subcommittee to, among other things, recommend other priority climate-change work to the CRN Steering Committee;
- Development and distribution of a tool kit designed to assist watershed groups with community resiliency and adaptation planning;
- Provide CRN Members with opportunities to weigh in on federal climate change legislation.

Adopted by the CRN Steering Committee on September 23, 2009.