

National Climate Assessment (NCA)

What is the National Climate Assessment (NCA)?

The NCA report is the official US Government “State of the Union” about climate change, produced and vetted by 13 Federal agencies, that

- Informs the nation about observed changes and impacts, the current status of the climate, and anticipated trends for the future
- Integrates scientific information from multiple sources and sectors to highlight key findings and significant gaps in our knowledge
- Establishes consistent methods for evaluating climate impacts in the U.S. in the context of broader global change
- Provides input to Federal science priorities and is used by U.S. citizens, communities, and businesses as they create more sustainable and environmentally sound plans for the nation’s future
- Focuses on the United States providing information on ten geographic regions, coasts, and ocean and marine resources amongst a variety of economic and other sectors
- Is provided as an interactive online document containing many useful, free downloadable images and graphics and has associated materials and works with tools such as the Climate Resilience Toolkit
- Provides links to the original research that underlies every key point
- Is updated every four years with the latest data and knowledge
- Is mandated by Congress through the U.S. Global Change Research Act
- Includes “sectoral” information on the effects of climate change on topics such as biodiversity, forestry, agriculture, health, rural communities, coastal zone development and ecosystems, water resources, energy, land use, etc.
- Provides authoritative and vetted information for understanding and communicating climate change science and impacts in the United States

What is an assessment?

An assessment like the NCA is a process in which scientists survey existing scientific studies and peer-reviewed literature and then integrate and synthesize the science within and between disciplines and across sectors and regions.



Why do we need assessments?

Assessments support the critical analysis of issues; highlight key knowledge that can improve policy choices; and identify significant gaps that can limit effective decision-making. Assessment activities also track progress by identifying changes in the condition of the integrated Earth system over time, advances in the underlying science, and changes in human responses.

Who Writes the NCA?

Assessments have been integral components of the U.S. Global Change Research Program (USGCRP) since its inception. Along with its strategic role as coordinator of Federal global change research, USGCRP is required by the Global Change Research Act of 1990 to conduct a National Climate Assessment (NCA). A team of more than 300 experts produces the full report. Stakeholders involved in the development of the assessment included decision-makers from the public and private sectors, resource and environmental managers, researchers, representatives from businesses and non-governmental organizations, and the general public.