

**NPLCC - INTERIM PROGRESS REPORT**  
**Integrating Climate Change into the State Wildlife Action Plan**  
**June 29<sup>th</sup>, 2016**

**1. ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION:**

Project Manager: Lynn Helbrecht  
Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife  
P.O. Box 43143  
Olympia, WA 98504-3143  
[lynn.helbrecht@dfw.wa.gov](mailto:lynn.helbrecht@dfw.wa.gov)  
(360) 902-2238

Project Title: Integrating Climate Change into Washington's State Wildlife Action Plan Revision  
Agreement Number: F15AC00149  
Report Date: June 29<sup>th</sup>, 2016  
Period of Time Covered: April 2, 2015 – June 29<sup>th</sup>, 2016

**2. PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES:**

The project goal was to integrate climate change impacts and implications into the Washington State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP) Revision. Specific objectives included researching existing data sources and adding species specific information on climate sensitivity to fact sheets for all 268 SGCN as well as 30 ecological systems of concern. We also planned to develop a "climate watch" list, highlighting those species considered most at risk from climate change. The primary audience was WDFW, since the SWAP is produced and owned by the agency. However, we fully intended that the product and results would be of benefit and useful to other organizations who work with fish and wildlife and their habitats in Washington.

**3. PROGRESS TO DATE:**

During this reporting period, we developed a spreadsheet which contains the following information for all 268 SGCN and 30 ecological systems of concern

- a. Narrative description of species/ecological system sensitivity to climate change, and a rank of 1-5.
- b. Assessment of confidence for the species/ecological system sensitivity rank.
- c. A list of the key exposure factors, and a rank for the exposure vulnerability, from 1-5, for species and ecological systems of concern.
- d. Assessment of confidence for the species/ecological system exposure rank
- e. A list of references for each entry.

Chapter 5 was added to the SWAP, which details the methodology used to conduct the vulnerability assessment, and highlights key themes and findings by major taxa group (amphibians, reptiles, birds, mammals, fish and invertebrates). Chapter 5 also includes a narrative description of projected climate change impacts on fish and wildlife habitats in Washington, for the 2040s and also for the 2080s.

We also prepared Appendix C, which provides the spreadsheet information detail for the 33 "climate watch" species, those which ranked highest in terms of vulnerability to climate change and also in terms of confidence (representing the number and quality of references).

As we worked on the vulnerability assessment for species and ecological systems, the outline and format of the SWAP itself continued to evolve. This resulted in a few shifts from our original scope of work. For example, we decided to conduct the vulnerability assessment for ecological systems rather than major habitat types (as originally intended) because the SWAP had evolved to focus and highlight instead on these systems as representative of habitat. We also had originally intended to include a discussion of actions that could help to address climate vulnerability for each of the SGCN – however as we worked with agency biologists to develop this information it became clear that this task would be most effective and useful for only those species which ranked high in terms of climate risk. We also wanted to spend more time training staff on understanding how management actions could be altered to better address climate impacts. For these reasons we included actions for mitigating climate risk only for selected highly vulnerability species, and opted to shift the task to identify specific management options for adaptation to the next phase of the project, after we had an opportunity to fully train staff.

A major lesson learned during this time period was the need to allow a more reasonable amount of time for staff biologists to review and vet draft products, in order to accommodate their other work assignments and responsibilities.

**4. PROJECT TIMELINE:**

This project is currently on track to meet all deliverables and deadlines.

**5. COMMUNICATION AND OUTREACH:**

The draft SWAP was completed and available for public review in August of 2015. This draft included Chapter 5, which described our approach to integrate climate change into the document, as well as highlighting key findings, and also Appendix C, which described in full the climate vulnerability data for the 33 climate watch species. A news release from WDFW announced the availability of this document for review by any interested parties. A webinar highlighting the contents of the SWAP, including climate change, was delivered on three occasions to interested parties (twice on August 20<sup>th</sup> and once on August 21<sup>st</sup>).

We also conducted a webinar for WDFW staff and others (WA DNR and RCO staff ) on January 19<sup>th</sup>, describing the methodology and introducing the draft final vulnerability assessment product. A full day followup workshop was held on February 12<sup>th</sup> in Olympia, and approximately 25 staff attended, including staff from WDFW, the NPLCC, and the Washington Natural Heritage Program. The purpose of this workshop was to fully explain the methodology of the vulnerability assessment and instruct staff on how to add or correct information if needed. We also delved deeper into how to use these products to inform management options and approaches. An additional workshop was tailored for staff from the Washington Field Office of USFWS on June 15<sup>th</sup>, 2016.

**6. SIGNATURE:** Lynn Helbrecht, Project Manager