



## United States Department of the Interior

U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY  
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January 26, 2012

To: Southwest Climate Science Center, Stakeholder Advisory  
Committee Representatives

From: Steven E. Schwarzbach, Acting Pacific Southwest Area Regional Executive,  
Stakeholder Advisory Committee Chair

Subject: Current year research priority determination

With the passage of a budget that funds the Southwest Climate Science Center for fiscal year 2012, the Center confronts a rapidly approaching deadline to identify and develop the current year research projects. In meeting that deadline, the SWCSC would like to engage the SAC as fully as possible to develop research themes within this formational year. Although the Stakeholder Advisory Committee is currently in the process of developing its function and structure, I would like to propose that the next SAC meeting/conference call focus on providing advice on the criteria for selecting current year research projects, identifying a range of potential research themes, and with finalizing those research priorities. I would also like to engage you in identifying Science Panel members to help craft appropriate science research topics.

Early in this process, it will be important for SAC representatives to provide input on their highest priority climate effects scientific needs to help structure the FY2012 research program for the SWCSC and its key collaborators. The next SAC conference call is scheduled for February 14<sup>th</sup> from 2:00 PM – 5:00 PM MST (1:00 PM – 4:00 PM PST). SAC members who are not able to participate are asked to provide information on their highest priority climate science needs to Raquel Goodrich at [goodrich@ecr.gov](mailto:goodrich@ecr.gov) no later than Friday, **February 10, 2012**. To get an idea of research project scope, we anticipate being able to support 1 – 5 lines of research with a likely minimum total value of \$100,000 each. Timelines for project completion would be in the 1 – 2 year range.

The Climate Science Centers have all received a set of broad goals for which projects funded under the National Climate Change and Wildlife Science Center ([nccwsc.usgs.gov](http://nccwsc.usgs.gov)) should fit. The SWCSC and its stakeholders will have an opportunity to identify important regional research themes through the long-term science planning process. Due to the collapsed timeframe of this budget year and to assist start up, the center plans to use the National NCCWSC goals during the FY12 funding cycle. Thus, I request your responses to this request for research priorities help address the following NCCWSC overall goals:

- Forecast fish and wildlife population and habitat changes in response to climate and other global changes
- Assess the vulnerability and risk of species and habitats to climate and other global changes
- Link models of physical climate change (such as temperature and precipitation) with models that predict ecological habitat, and population responses
- Develop standardized approaches to monitoring and help link existing monitoring efforts to climate, other global change, and ecological or biological response models
- Develop data management policies and practices to ensure that data generated at NCCWSC and the DOI CSCs are shared and interoperable with other datasets

These goals should be interpreted broadly to include human biology and populations as part of the management information needs determination relating to climate-ecosystem interaction research.

Although not all of their needs will be best met under the climate science mission of the CSCs, the Landscape Conservation Cooperatives and CSCs are expected to work together to determine sets of common research priorities. Additionally, most of the LCCs have started to identify management-related needs for scientific information, a process from which we hope to benefit at the SWCSC level. The four LCC representatives on the SAC are encouraged to work with the steering committees they chair, as well as their LCC coordinators and science workgroups, to submit priorities. We will be seeking consensus climate effects research themes that encompass multiple organizations' priorities and geographic domains, and that are common to the greater Southwest's river basins, montane systems, and arid lands, as well as to the Pacific Coast.

The SWCSC website ([www.doi.gov/csc/southwest](http://www.doi.gov/csc/southwest)) has information on the SWCSC mission and scientific capabilities, and can serve as a resource to help determine the type of scientific needs that will be most appropriate in responses to this information request. We plan to take advantage of the considerable knowledge about climate effects science in the Southwest afforded to us by the SWCSC host institution principals. Their input will be included with advice from the SAC as we work to integrate needs and research concepts from key sources. Related to this, the efforts of over 100 researchers who are contributing to the ongoing Southwest Technical Contribution to the National Climate Assessment (<http://www.globalchange.gov/what-we-do/assessment>) can serve as another source for research direction.

Independent reviews and recommendations will help determine how SWCSC research institutions can most effectively collaborate with USGS and other research partners to address the priorities identified by the SAC. As mentioned in the December 13, 2011 SAC meeting, forming the SWCSC "Science Panel" (SWCSP) will help to address our need to transition from management information priorities to well-defined research projects. Therefore, we are seeking nominations of science leaders from SAC research partners as prospective SWCSP representatives. We envision the SWCSP consisting of approximately 10 scientists who will be able to contribute time to this synthesis process during the first half of 2012. The SWCSP would also provide oversight and advice on peer review and final project selection. The SWCSC Director will have the final responsibility for finalizing the Annual Project Plan and selecting project Scopes of Work for submission to the Federal acquisition process for funding.

The proposed schedule for developing the 2012 research program is summarized below. This schedule will be discussed and finalized on the Feb. 14 conference call:

- February 10 – For SAC members not able to participate in the February 14<sup>th</sup> conference call, send research priorities and SWCSP nominees to Raquel Goodrich at [Goodrich@ecr.gov](mailto:Goodrich@ecr.gov)
- February 14 – SAC call to discuss process for FY 12 SWCSC research theme determination
- February 29 - Facilitated workshop with SWCSP, SWCSC principals, and USGS research leadership to identify research themes and potential cross-organizational research collaboratives
- March 16 - SAC briefed about themes identified and approach to proposal solicitation
- March 30 - Prospectuses solicited from research collaborative leads
- April 13 - Prospectuses due, peer review initiated
- April 27 - Peer review comments due, prospectus revisions initiated
- May 11 - Final research scopes due. Acquisition actions initiated

We look forward to your responses to this request and are planning to integrate a discussion of this process on the upcoming SAC conference call. Please refer any questions to Dr. Dave Busch, Interim SWCSC Director, [dave\\_busch@usgs.gov](mailto:dave_busch@usgs.gov) or 916-278-9540.

cc:

SWCSC Director and PIs