Adaptation-Informed Funding

Integrate climate adaptation into coastal restoration projects by including adaptation considerations in RFPs and other project evaluation criteria

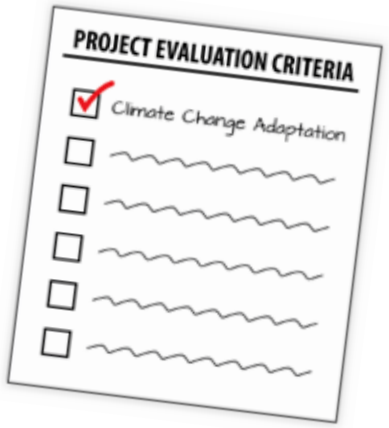
Public agency programs, private foundations and other groups that fund coastal conservation or wetlands work have tremendous leverage in terms of what work moves forward and how it is done. Just by asking applicants to include climate considerations in all proposals and projects, these groups could get more people thinking about the importance of adaptation, as well as creating a broader set of ideas and options for how to do climate-smart wetlands work.

First, at a strategic planning level, funding agencies should consider incorporating adaptation considerations in decisions about funding priorities or priority restoration areas. Second, at a more tactical implementation level, every Request for Proposals (RFP) should include one or more of the following: a) a requirement to conduct an assessment of how the proposed work itself is or is not vulnerable to climate change; b) a requirement to discuss how the project reduces the vulnerability of the species, habitats and systems of concern to climate change; and c) acknowledgment that these two considerations will count for some number of points in the overall proposal score. The depth of discussion required should be scaled to the RFP, and proposal reviewers should be provided with a clear adaptation checklist or evaluation criteria. Several funding organizations have an adaptation component in their requirements, but a model screening tool or checklist should be developed for use by these organizations.

To support these new requirements, funders should provide guidance, resources and potentially webinars or trainings to enhance applicant ability to meet these requirements. They may provide this support directly, or by funding other groups to provide it.

Case Example | Climate-Ready Great Lakes Restoration

The National Atmospheric and Oceanic Administration (NOAA) has taken a systematic and multi-phased approach to incorporating climate considerations in coastal investment decisions. This began with the 2010 release of the *Programmatic Framework for Considering Climate Change Impacts in Coastal Habitat Restoration, Land Acquisition and Facility Development Investments*. The Framework included recommendations relevant to all programs as well as more targeted recommendations regarding the project selection, project monitoring and project planning phases of coastal habitat restoration.



Following the release of the Framework, NOAA's Great Lakes Habitat Restoration Program partnered with National Wildlife Federation and EcoAdapt to incorporate climate considerations into the process of evaluating proposals for funding and into the design and implementation of Great Lakes restoration projects (including those funded through the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative). This included the development of *Restoring the Great Lakes' Coastal Future*, a climate-smart restoration guide for the Great Lakes (updated in 2014), as well as targeted support for seven coastal restoration projects in the region.

Challenges and Benefits

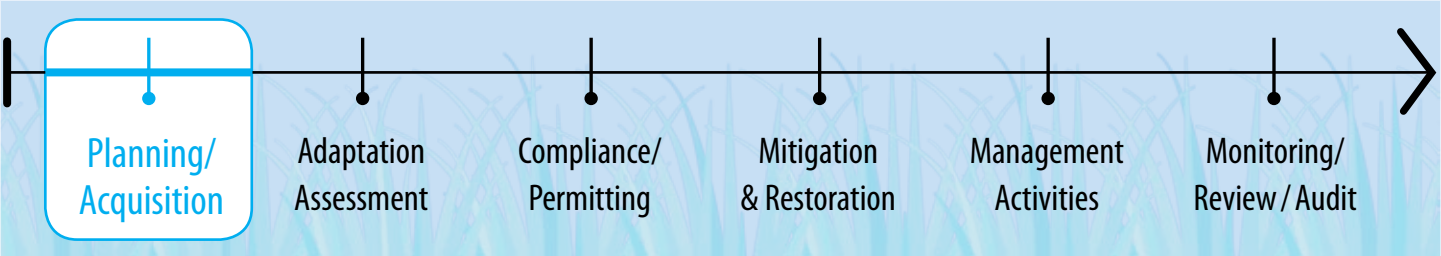
Particularly at the outset, funding applicants, proposal reviewers and funders may be uncertain about how to incorporate adaptation into the funding process. Without a checklist or rubric that funders can readily use and adapt to integrate into their request for proposals, funders will have to develop their own criteria for evaluating the strength of adaptation elements in proposals. Implementing this practice effectively could require additional or unexpected capacity building and support for both the funder and the applicant. Bringing in climate considerations can also increase the burden on funding applicants, requiring them to identify and integrate climate information into all stages of project development, implementation and monitoring.

The benefits of this practice include an increased return on investment for funders, and an increase in longer-term wetland restoration and conservation success, by decreasing project vulnerability to climate change. It also provides an impetus for funders and potential grantees to ensure that there are mechanisms for easy access to the most recent and applicable climate science. Finally, building adaptation considerations into wetland funding processes will increase the understanding of adaptation considerations among wetland managers and other restoration professionals.

Who should implement the practice?

Landscape Conservation Cooperatives, NOAA climate hubs, Great Lakes Restoration Initiative, among other initiatives, are particularly well-suited to these sorts of efforts.

When should this practice happen?



Tools and Resources

Wildlife Conservation Society of North America Climate Adaptation Fund | This fund is not wetland focused, but the Applicant Guidance Document provides good input on what type of characteristics should be considered when integrating climate change in a grant proposal. | www.wcsnorthamerica.org/ClimateAdaptationFund/tabid/4813/Default.aspx#.U8bd-5RdVZA

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Adaptation Program | www.corpsclimate.us/cca.cfm

Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development Review of Screening and Assessment Tools (2011) | Reviews nine adaptation screening and assessment tools, five of which were built to inform funding decisions. | www.oecd-ilibrary.org/environment/harmonising-climate-risk-management_5kg706918zvl-en

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration – Climate-Ready Great Lakes | Provides modules designed to give stakeholders information about climate change in the Great Lakes region and what needs to be done to reduce vulnerability to these impacts. | www.regions.noaa.gov/great-lakes/index.php/resources/climate-ready-great-lakes

The Georgetown Climate Center's Adaptation Clearinghouse | Provides a wealth of information, including a searchable library of existing adaptation policy and analysis. | www.georgetownclimate.org/adaptation/clearinghouse

Great Lakes Commission des Grands Lacs

NATIONAL WILDLIFE FEDERATION