

## Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies Climate Change Talking Points

### **Climate change compounds existing threats to fish and wildlife and their habitats.**

- For more than 100 years, state fish and wildlife agencies have been managing natural resources for the “public trust” by addressing threats to fish and wildlife including habitat fragmentation, degradation, and loss from changing land uses, pollution and sedimentation, deleterious or invasive species, and unsustainable use of natural resources. However, climate change exacerbates these threats, making it more difficult and costly for agencies to manage.
- Climate change will impact all ecosystems, habitats, and species not just those considered rare.
- The specific implications of climate change on fish and wildlife are uncertain and vary on a regional and state basis.

### **State fish and wildlife agencies are working to identify, prepare for and respond to climate change impacts on fish and wildlife.**

- State fish and wildlife agencies have “public trust” responsibilities for most fish and wildlife resources.
- Pressures on fish and wildlife caused by climate change emphasize the need for increased conservation and science-based management and the appropriate funding to do so.
- States recognize that climate change is a large-scale issue and are working together to develop landscape-scale responses that support managing robust populations and healthy habitats – the best insurance in an uncertain future.
- States have many existing landscape-scale fish and wildlife efforts that can be adapted to incorporate climate change impacts including State Wildlife Action Plans, the North American Waterfowl Management Plan, and the National Fish Habitat Action Plan.

### **To take action to conserve fish and wildlife in the face of climate change, we need to fund fish and wildlife conservation actions by state agencies.**

- Climate change is adding new fish and wildlife management burdens on states, requiring additional staff and funding.
- A new, stable source of dedicated funding is needed to enhance state and federal agency efforts to meet their fish and wildlife “public trust” responsibilities in the future.
- Distribution of new funding should use existing successful and proven delivery mechanisms such as sport fish (i.e., Dingell-Johnson) and wildlife (i.e., Pittman-Robertson) restoration grant programs administered by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service since 1950 and 1937 respectively.

- States are in the best position to set priorities for climate change adaptation funding based on their existing planning and implementation responsibilities and roles for trust species and natural resources. State fish and wildlife agencies often partner with federal, regional, and local government (i.e., watershed districts, soil and water conservation districts) entities to deliver programs. Recently state fish and wildlife agencies have been important components of governor-directed statewide planning for energy conservation and other climate related issues.

**By addressing the effects of climate change today, state fish and wildlife agencies also help people.**

Fish and wildlife health can be an early indicator of disease and pollution that affect human populations. Fish and wildlife diseases pose threats to human and wildlife health, destabilize trade, and cause economic damage. Climate changes alter the distribution of dangerous pathogens and infectious diseases. (Note: See “The Deadly Dozen” [http://www.wcs.org/media/file/DEADLYdozen\\_screen.pdf](http://www.wcs.org/media/file/DEADLYdozen_screen.pdf) )

- State agencies are challenged to manage and respond in such a way that fish and wildlife will adapt and survive, recreation and economies that are dependent on them will thrive, and social benefits of functioning ecosystems persist (e.g., fish and wildlife habitat, water quantity and quality, etc).