

Midwest Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies: Climate Change Technical Working Committee Report May 2024

Meeting Time and Place –

The MAFWA Climate Change Committee met virtually on the following days (Appendix 2 has meeting agendas):

- 01/19/24 – 2:00-3:30 pm ET – Whole committee (IL, MI, WI, MO, MN, SD)
- 02/05/24 – 3:00-4:30 pm ET – RAD subcommittee (MI, IL, MO)
- 02/09/24 – 1:00-2:30 pm ET – Adaptation subcommittee (MI, MO)
- 02/23/24 – 2:00-3:30 pm ET – Adaptation subcommittee (MI, MO)
- 03/18/24 – 2:00-3:30 pm ET – RAD subcommittee (MI, IL, MO)
- 04/05/25 – 1:00-2:30 pm ET – Whole committee (IL, MI, MO, MN, SD)
- 04/19/24 – 1:00-2:30 pm ET – RAD subcommittee (MI, IL, MO MN)
- 05/06/24 – 3:00-4:30 pm ET – RAD subcommittee (IA, MI, MN, IL, MO)

Attendance – see above

Committee members identified in Appendix 1.

Executive Summary –

2023 was the warmest on record globally, and climate-related impacts challenged state fish and wildlife agency work across the Midwest. Fishing seasons were canceled for lack of ice, and spring arrived a month early, causing managers to scramble to reschedule spring surveys. Last year, the Director's agreed that we should develop a set of trainings on climate adaptation and that they would promote them in each MAFWA state. The Committee has been meeting frequently this year to develop those trainings. The first training addresses how to incorporate climate adaptation at the scope of annual work planning. This training is completely developed and ready to be scheduled. The other training is on implementation of the Resist-Accept-Direct framework. It is still in development and is expected to be finished in late summer or early fall.

Director Action Items –

1. Identify a new Chair.
2. Support your staff attending the Adaptive Work Planning and the RAD trainings when they are scheduled.

Director Information Items –

1. The competitive State Wildlife Grants proposal that was developed between the MAFWA Climate Committee and MAFWA Diversity Committee on Assessing Climate Vulnerability and Adaptive Capacity of 538 Midwest Species of Greatest Conservation Need was funded and the project is underway.
2. The USGS Midwest Climate Adaptation Science Center continues to be an excellent partner, and willingly shares their expertise with this committee. They are very responsive to the needs of state agencies, both in proactively asking us what we need, as well as funding research projects to address those needs. They invite MAFWA Climate Committee members to their Annual Gathering (in Indiana last year, in Michigan this upcoming August) where the Midwest CASC shares research results and holds workshops to hear feedback from their partners.
3. State actions to address and adapt to changes in climate, including reacting to climate-related losses or damage (additional details in Appendix 3)
 - Illinois: continues to implement the Department's [Climate Action Plan](#) (CAP). The CAP is focused on (1) reaching net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050, (2) enhancing the resilience to climate change of natural areas, (3) ensuring climate actions taken benefit all Illinois residents and communities, and (4) inspiring others to take climate action. Over 70 IDNR staff members have participated in the development and implementation of the CAP through seven working groups (Education & Engagement, Equity & Inclusion, Natural Resources, Solid Waste, Transportation & Fuel Use, Energy & Renewables, Water & Waste Water) and in their daily work.
 - Michigan: developed and began implementation of a department-wide climate policy; NIACS training for adapting on-the-ground habitat projects in northern Michigan; provide state perspectives on CASC advisory committees (Midwest, and national); canceled sturgeon season for lack of safe ice.
 - Minnesota: Our Fisheries section is adding a RAD framework chapter to an updated version of the Lake Management Planning Guide. To help keep staff informed our division distributes a quarterly newsletter on climate change topics and hosts periodic Climate Action Conversations virtual meetings for staff. We are also directly engaged with the Minnesota Tribal Environmental Committee on climate issues and a multi-organizational climate committee on forest adaptation that includes the University of MN, the MN Forest Resources Council, and members of the forest products industry.
 - Missouri: drafted and initiating discussions on implementation of a department-focused climate adaptation framework; provide state perspectives on the Midwest CASC advisory committee; pursuing Climate Pollution Reduction Grants to increase building efficiency, electrify diesel equipment, and modernize forest nursery storage equipment.
 - South Dakota: staff working on Wildlife Action Plan Revision attended the Competitive-State Wildlife Grant climate change vulnerability assessment training in March 2024. Initial analysis results will be reviewed upon completion, and methods will be applied to additional SD species of greatest conservation need for the 2025 Revision.
 - Wisconsin: provided state perspectives on the Midwest CASC advisory committee; serve on the AFWA Climate Adaptation Committee; serve on the Science Advisory Board and on

working groups for the Wisconsin Initiative on Climate Change Impacts (WICCI); developing “climate smart” seed lists for restoration of various native plant communities; hosted workshops on site-level climate adaptation planning for land managers.

- Many Midwest states: successfully applied for a competitive state wildlife grant (with six states: IN, MI, MN, MO, NE, SD) to develop management-relevant vulnerability assessments for 538 fish and wildlife species.

Time and Place of Next Meeting –

TBD

Appendix 1: MAFWA Climate Committee Active Members

IA – Katy Fullin

IL – Leon Hinz

IN – Elizabeth Mabee (invited and began participating in May)

MI – Chris Hoving, Amy Derosier

MO – Matt Vitello

MN – Mike Larson

NE – Caroline Jezierski (left agency; need replacement)

SD – Eileen Dowd Stukel

WI – Tara Bergeson

USGS Midwest Climate Science Center – Olivia LeDee

Appendix 2: Agendas for meetings

01/19/24 Agenda: whole committee

- Reconnect
- General updates
- Revisit training proposal
- Planning for training
- Next steps

Standing Agenda: Adaptation Training Development subcommittees

- Reconnect
- Adaptation training planning & development
- Next steps
- Subcommittee met for 1.5 hours on 2/5/24, 2/9/24, 2/23/24, 3/18/24, 4/19/24, and 5/06/24

04/05/24 Agenda: whole committee

- Reconnect
- Update on trainings

- Other updates
- Report to MAFWA Directors
- Chair for next year
- Next steps

Appendix 3: Expanded highlights on state climate adaptation actions

Below are highlights of some projects and efforts that the Midwest states are doing to address climate impacts to fish, wildlife, and their habitats to ensure their long-term sustainability:

Illinois

The Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) in partnership with the Illinois Smart Energy Design Assistance Center ([SEDAC](#)) is conducting energy audits at state facilities maintained by IDNR. These audits are intended to reveal where energy savings can occur. At the Jake Wolfe Memorial Fish Hatchery transitioning to LED lighting operating on motion sensors, adding variable drive well pumps, and adjusting freezer temperatures has resulted in a 25% reduction in annual electrical costs.

The [Urban and Community Forestry Program](#) received a \$13,85 million Federal grant to support communities with tree maintenance and management. These funds will provide assistance to underserved and disadvantaged communities to keep their forests healthy so they continue to provide services such summer cooling, blocking winter winds, sequestering and storing carbon, and providing wildlife habitat.

Equipment vendors collaborated with IDNR staff to hold a demonstration of electrical mowing and landscaping equipment at the [Lewis & Clark State Historic Site](#) in September 2023. The event was open to the public and was attended by State and Federal Agency Staff and local residents.

Michigan

The Field Supervisor for northern Michigan initiated a project to train all of his staff in the NIACS adaptation workbook and develop habitat and management plans for pine marten, snowshoe hare, neotropical migrating warblers, and woodcock. Staff were instructed to include part of their climate adaptation plan developed through the workbook process in their work planning budget requests for FY2025. Field staff reported dreading a three-day climate training, but post-training reviews were positive. They wanted to do something similar again and wanted their forestry co-management partners to take the training so they could collaborate from a similar understanding of adaptation opportunities and needs.

Missouri

Staff at MDC recently completed drafting a Climate Adaptation Framework for MDC operations. The Framework has been shared with MDC Administration and discussions are beginning on next steps and implementation planning. The Framework is intended to position MDC to pursue climate adaptation into the future, identifying 20 strategies in seven categories including land and water health, management planning, staff training and capacity building, and communications.

Wisconsin

The Bureau of Natural Heritage Conservation continues to work on numerous on-the-ground climate adaptation projects. The Natural Resources Foundation sponsored the [creation of a film](#) based on the Spur Lake Restoration Project. Bureau staff are part of the Spur Lake Working Group that includes representatives from Sokaogon Chippewa Community, Lac du Flambeau Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Indians, Lac Vieux Desert Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Indians, and Great Lakes Indian Fish and Wildlife Commission. This project is aimed at restoring manoomin (wild rice) at a culturally important State Natural Area.

In collaboration with WICCI, staff are developing a decision-support tool for assisted migration of rare native plants in the state. The tool consists of an Excel workbook that takes users through a series of questions, and a companion guide that offers detailed explanations for each of the questions along with background information, helpful resources, and a bibliography. The decision-support tool is not intended to offer a definitive answer as to whether one should initiate an assisted migration project. Instead, it is meant to offer a logically organized set of questions that are important to consider, and a convenient means of documenting a practitioner's current state of knowledge, capacity, and interpretations of the questions at hand. The project includes significant engagement and collaboration with Wisconsin's tribal nations.

Staff across the department continue to implement *A Blueprint for DNR Climate Action 2021-2025*. The blueprint includes statewide goals drawn from Governor Evers' Executive Orders #38 (Relating to Clean Energy in Wisconsin) and #52 (Relating to the Creation of the Governor's Task Force on Climate Change), as well as Wisconsin's commitments related to the international Paris Climate Accord and the state's participation in the U.S. Climate Alliance. Along with these statewide goals are more targeted departmental goals and practical actions that agency programs are undertaking. The actions, for the most part, are internally focused and center around four areas of emphasis for work planning: climate and environmental justice, climate mitigation, climate adaptation, and cross-cutting actions.