

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 27, 2018

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski
Chairman
U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment
and Related Agencies
131 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Tom Udall
Ranking Member
U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment
and Related Agencies
125 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Murkowski and Ranking Member Udall:

As the Subcommittee works on its Fiscal Year (FY) 2019 appropriations bill, we respectfully request that you provide funding of no less than \$25 million, equal to the FY 2018 enacted level, for the National and Regional Climate Adaptation Science Centers, further referred to as “Centers,” under the Land Resources account of the United States (U.S.) Geological Survey. We also request that you reject the President’s budget proposal to reduce the number of regional Centers from eight to three, and ensure that eight regional Centers are maintained.

The national Center was established in 2008 under the Bush administration and was directed to provide science to help fish and wildlife resource managers prepare for, respond to, and reduce the negative consequences of climate extremes. To meet this goal, the national Center established several regional Centers that could address the unique weather patterns of different areas of the U.S. These Centers became the current eight regional Centers. The Centers are strong, effective partnerships between the U.S. Department of the Interior (DOI), research universities, and tribes or tribal colleges.

The Centers have helped natural and cultural resource managers identify and assess climate-related vulnerabilities in their local jurisdictions as a first step in mitigating those vulnerabilities. These decision-makers are already using information developed with the Centers to reduce the impacts of wildfire and drought, nuisance flooding and flash flooding, ecosystem stresses, reductions in water supply and recharge, and changes in hunting and fishing patterns on their communities. In addition, activities include strengthening the resilience of tribes and indigenous peoples to climate stresses.

Every year, heavy precipitation, flooding, drought, coastal storm surge, hot and cold extremes, and other weather hazards take a heavy toll on the nation’s natural resources. These impacts have dire economic consequences for Americans. For example, scientists from the Pacific Islands Center are assessing impacts on corals, which are valued at nearly \$34 billion in the main Hawaiian Islands alone. Management actions that protect natural resources from the impact of such hazards provide enormous economic benefits to the nation.

The \$90 billion fish and game industry, with over 680,000 jobs, relies on the maintenance of robust and resilient habitats for fish and game species. Each year over 300 million people participate in outdoor recreation, visiting vast landscapes, coastlines, majestic mountains, and National Parks all across the country, generating billions of dollars in economic benefit to the surrounding communities. Cost-effectively maintaining the health of these resources in the face of climate extremes requires relevant, applicable data, tools, and scientific knowledge. The Centers work closely with water, land, cultural heritage, and other natural resource managers in providing timely information for managers to use in making local decisions.

The Centers are located at host research universities throughout the country to reduce costs to the Federal government (through financial leveraging and cost-sharing agreements), to develop and share cutting-edge research, and to access the talent, energy, and capacity of outstanding and diverse students with local knowledge and experience. The eight regional Centers are:

Pacific Islands, hosted at the University of Hawaii–Manoa;
Alaska, hosted at the University of Alaska;
Northwest, hosted at the University of Washington;
Southeast, hosted at the North Carolina State University;
Southwest, hosted at the University of Arizona;
North Central, hosted at the Colorado State University;
South Central, hosted at the University of Oklahoma; and
Northeast, hosted at the University of Massachusetts–Amherst.

Recently, the Centers have seen dramatic growth in the requests for their scientific guidance and products by DOI managers, Tribes, and DOI partners, including state agencies, private and non-profit organizations, and municipalities. Without sustained funding for the eight regional Centers to translate science into actionable information, data, and tools for natural resource managers and partners to utilize for decision-making, America's lands, economy, infrastructure, and ecosystems will be ill-equipped to deal with the challenges presented by climate extremes.

We support the reputable and important work of the Centers and because of their value and substantial return-on-investment, we request that you provide full funding and maintain the eight regional Centers.

Sincerely,



MAZIE K. HIRONO
United States Senator



MARIA CANTWELL
United States Senator



EDWARD J. MARKEY
United States Senator



RON WYDEN
United States Senator



MICHAEL F. BENNET
United States Senator



SHELDON WHITEHOUSE
United States Senator



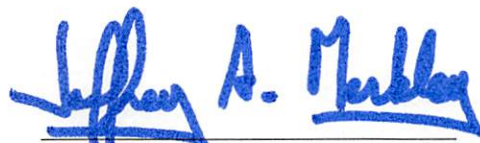
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