

Office of Climate Adaptation and Sustainability

ISSUE SUMMARY:

The Office of Climate Adaptation and Sustainability (OCAS) focuses broadly on the impacts of climate change on the environment and the sustainability of communities and businesses that live and operate within it. OCAS oversees and coordinates EPA's climate adaptation activities, including the integration of climate adaptation into EPA's programs, policies, rulemakings, enforcement activities, and operations. It also develops and implements cross-cutting and cross-media climate change mitigation and sustainability strategies with respect to industry sectors, communities, materials management and the built environment. OCAS accomplishes its work in coordination with EPA program offices and regions, and by partnering with states, Tribes, territories, local governments, businesses, and other federal agencies to increase the resilience and sustainability of the nation, with a particular focus on advancing environmental justice.

BACKGROUND:

Climate change poses significant risks to EPA's mission of protecting human health and the environment, as well as its own workforce and facilities. For over a decade, EPA has focused on ensuring it continues to fulfill its mission of protecting human health and the environment even as the climate changes.

Climate Resilience and Adaptation

EPA has already made significant strides in partnering with other federal agencies as part of a whole-of-government approach to promote climate resilience across the nation. Nevertheless, as articulated in the 2023 National Climate Resilience Framework, more needs to be done given the magnitude of this global challenge.

EPA's new 2024-2027 Climate Adaptation Plan describes the central role EPA is playing in the Biden-Harris Administration's efforts to tackle the climate crisis and build a climate-resilient nation. The establishment of OCAS in March 2024 highlights the importance the agency places on climate adaptation and overseeing the agency-wide priorities presented in the new Climate Adaptation Plan. OCAS fulfills this role and chairs the Cross-EPA Work Group on Climate Adaptation.

Several OCAS activities are noteworthy. OCAS is working closely with the National Programs and Regional Offices to modernize the agency's financial assistance programs to encourage climate-resilient investments across the nation. It also manages the Resilient Infrastructure Subgroup on Climate (RISC) to advance this work in a collaborative way. OCAS chairs the Resilient Rules Subgroup which is tasked with integrating climate adaptation into rulemaking

processes, including regulations, permits and National Environmental Policy Act reviews. OCAS works closely with the Office of Enforcement and Compliance Assurance (OECA) to include climate adaptation and resilience in case conclusions, whenever appropriate. OCAS and the Office of Research and Development (ORD) launched an initiative to increase the climate literacy of our staff and agency partners, increasing awareness of the risks posed by climate change to human health and the environment, and the opportunities to increase the nation's resilience to climate impacts.

OCAS is equipping communities with the tools, data, information and technical support they need to assess their climate risks and develop the climate-resilience solutions most appropriate for them. Through the Community Change Equitable Resilience Technical Assistance Program, OCAS and the Office of Community Revitalization are helping disaster-prone and disadvantaged communities design climate resilience projects that are eligible for Community Change Grant funding. The Climate Adaptation Resource Center (ARC-X) is an innovative system designed to help communities across the United States anticipate, prepare for, and adapt to the impacts of climate change. It provides local government officials with an integrated package of information tailored specifically to their needs, based on where they live and the particular issues of concern to them.

Climate and Sustainable Strategies

EPA's FY 2022–2026 Strategic Plan recognizes that solving the climate crisis and working toward an equitable and sustainable future requires commitment and action from every sector of the economy. By working collaboratively with the business community, OCAS encourages and supports voluntary private sector environmental action, including environmental justice initiatives and the pursuit of meaningful corporate and sector-wide climate and sustainability goals.

OCAS houses EPA's Smart Sectors program, which engages at the national and regional levels with industry trade associations, individual companies and other stakeholders to pursue opportunities for decarbonization and improved environmental performance. At the national level, the program works with major carbon-intensive industrial sectors, including cement and concrete, iron and steel, paper and wood products, chemicals, plastics, semiconductors, and construction. Program leads for each sector serve as liaisons to participating trade associations to facilitate effective communication and engagement with the agency, conduct educational site visits, and develop reports and other information on the sector's environmental performance. Each Regional Office focuses on one or more sectors that drive economic growth and present opportunities for environmental improvement within the region.

In addition to engaging with industry sectors, OCAS also works across the agency to pursue the goals of industrial decarbonization and an equitable and sustainable economy. A key challenge in advancing climate action by the private sector involves the difficulty of measuring progress. OCAS is working in partnership with the Office of Research and Development (ORD) to develop

state-of-the-art methods to measure the greenhouse gas footprint of industry sectors and track their progress over time. OCAS also supports the Buy Clean Initiative by developing analytic tools and carrying out activities to assist in measuring, reporting, and steadily reducing the carbon footprint of construction materials and products. In addition, OCAS supports interagency efforts to determine the best data and methods for calculating the carbon intensity of domestically produced steel under a potential carbon border adjustment (tax) mechanism.

OCAS develops educational materials to support the private sector in undertaking voluntary actions to advance equity and justice, including by engaging communities, reducing cumulative burdens, and delivering community benefits. OCAS also addresses a variety of other environmental, climate, and sustainability challenges and emerging issues that require interdisciplinary expertise and cross-sector, multi-media, and interagency (whole-of-government) approaches.

KEY EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS:

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Congress	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Industry	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> States	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Tribes	<input type="checkbox"/> Media	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other
Federal Agency					
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NGO	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Local Governments	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other: Local Communities, Trade Associations			

Key stakeholders for OCAS include local communities, businesses, states and Tribes vulnerable to the impacts of a changing climate. In addition, EPA works closely with other federal agencies to improve collaboration and streamline the sharing of federal resources to increase the nation's climate resilience. OCAS also develops partnerships with industry sectors, leading companies, and other organizations that represent a cross section of the American economy, to advance EPA's climate change and sustainability objectives.

MOVING FORWARD:

Working with our partners, we are making strides to build a climate-resilient and sustainable nation, but we are far from finished. Tackling the climate crisis and advancing sustainability requires perseverance and collaboration at all levels. Upcoming opportunities include:

- Providing additional technical assistance and capacity building to communities and Tribes to support their resilience and adaptation goals.
- Providing post-award support to communities that receive Community Change Grants to successfully implement climate resilience projects.
- Identifying additional industry sectors to collaborate with and support.
- Enhancing and updating existing webpages and tools, including ARC-X, Sectors Snapshots, the Sectors Lifecycle Carbon Assessment Tool, and the Climate Resilience and Adaptation Funding Toolbox.

LEAD OFFICE/REGION AND OTHER KEY OFFICES/REGIONS:

- Lead Office: Office of Policy (Office of the Administrator)
- Cross-EPA Work Group on Climate Adaptation: Chaired by the Office of Policy with representatives from Program Offices and all 10 Regional Offices
- Regional Smart Sectors Programs: Coordinated by the Office of Policy with points of contact in all 10 Regional Offices