Final June 16, 2017

Advisory Committee for the Sustained National Climate Assessment

Summary

This NOAA committee develops recommendations to make better use of data produced by the US Global Change Research Program (USGCRP), a Congressionally-mandated interagency research program. Specifically, this Advisory Committee provides advice on making USGCRP data more accessible and useful to private sector/civic organizations and state/municipal governments for their use in planning and decision-making in domains such as transportation, energy, water resources, and other infrastructure, or planning for coastal developments affected by expected changes in weather patterns and climate extremes. The committee is composed of 15 members from academia, the private sector, municipal government, and non-governmental organizations from across the country. The committee is currently preparing a report in response to a request from NOAA on behalf of the USGCRP. The report will provide options and recommendations on (1) identifying what data from the USGCRP is most needed to improve the effectiveness and profitability of regional and local level decision-making; (2) facilitating use of USGCRP data by private sector and other non-governmental groups to develop products tailored for users; (3) improving interactions with end users, and (4) evaluating program effectiveness. The committee is currently seeking input from the public, including private sector and other groups that have been working with the data, to consider for its recommendations.

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Advisory Committee for the Sustained National Climate Assessment

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This document provides an overview of the Advisory Committee for the Sustained National Climate Assessment. This NOAA committee provides advice on a Congressionally-mandated research program that integrates scientific investigation of global environmental changes across 13 Federal agencies. This overview document covers the following topics: (1) the context of the committee with respect to the interagency US Global Change Research Program, (2) definition and goals of "sustained assessment", (3) the terms of reference and membership of the committee, and (4) the committee's current task and pending request for public input.

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1. Committee context: US Global Change Research Program (USGCRP)

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The USGCRP was established by an act of Congress in 1990 to coordinate research on how natural environmental processes and Earth systems (for example, oceans, glaciers/ice sheets, chemical composition of the atmosphere, weather patterns, flows of surface/sub-surface water, coastal processes, biodiversity) are being influenced by a wide variety of human activities. The Global Change Research Act (PL101-606) establishes the program and requires (*inter alia*) the participating agencies (including NOAA) to prepare coordinated budget submissions to the Office of Management and Budget; coordinate US scientific research with other countries; and prepare "assessments" (evaluations of scientific information relevant for understanding changes and their impacts) not less frequently than every four years.

2. Sustained Assessment

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"Assessments" are products that evaluate the state of science relevant to different policy-related and practical questions. The USGCRP has produced three such assessments in the form of extensive technical reports. Such reports have been evaluated as necessary but insufficient for informing decisions in sectors such as energy, water resources, forestry, ecosystem management, coastal development, agriculture, public health, national security, and other areas. Thus, the National Academy of Sciences and other bodies have recommended that the USGCRP develop a "sustained assessment" process that provides a more diverse set of data and information that better meet the needs of users. Such information can reduce losses in natural disasters and identify opportunities for sustainable development. "Sustained assessment" engages scientists and stakeholders (end users in these and other sectors) in discovery, communication, and use of scientific knowledge of global change. In addition to preparing reports, the sustained assessment will provide a wider range of products including data sets, visualizations, maps and geographical information systems, decision support tools, and other science-based tools. A key objective is to increase access of the private sector and other groups to basic data provided by the USGCRP to enable them to develop needed products, including on a commercial basis, for end users, hence increasing diversity of data interpretation and evaluation of impacts and response strategies.

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3. History of the Advisory Committee

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The ACSNCA was established in 2015 by NOAA in consultation with the Office of Science and Technology Policy (in the Executive Office of the President) to provide advice on the sustained

assessment process to NOAA and, through the agency, to all 13 agencies of the USGCRP. The language in the charter states that the purpose of the committee is to provide advice on assessment products and activities, including "engagement of stakeholders and on sustained assessment activities and the quadrennial National Climate Assessment Report." Under the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA), a federal advisory committee can only be hosted and funded by one agency. NOAA agreed to take on this responsibility because of its existing portfolio of research and because of its experience in hosting previous FACA committees in support of the National Climate Assessment efforts. The current membership is provided as an attachment to this document and consists of 15 members from academia, the private sector, non-governmental organizations, and municipal governments. The chair of the committee is Dr. Richard H. Moss, a senior scientist with the Joint Global Change Research Program at the University of Maryland.

4. Current Activity: Developing Recommendations on Sustained Assessment

The committee is currently preparing a short report (expected to be ~50 pages) in response to a request made at its March 2017 meeting by NOAA on behalf of the USGCRP. The request states:

> "In order for the USG to implement a vision for Sustained Assessment in time for the 5th (and future) National Climate Assessment, NOAA requests, on behalf of the USGCRP and its member agencies, that the Advisory Committee for the Sustained National Climate Assessment develop a set of recommendations for a Sustained Assessment process by Spring 2018. We also request a progress or interim report by September 30, 2017. The recommendations should be feasible, realistic in terms of budget implications, and grounded in the Congressional mandate for a quadrennial assessment."

The committee is developing recommendations on four key topics:

1. Identifying the most important data, information, and activities for USGCRP to support assessment of the extent and implications of global change in the United States;
2. Facilitating use of core USGCRP data by the private sector, state/local governments, and university-based and other groups to develop specialized (and potentially commercially-provided) sustained assessment products for end users;
3. Improving the development of partnerships and engagement with users of the assessment;
4. Evaluating the assessment for accuracy, trustworthiness, and utility to end users, to facilitate improvements in the USGCRP and activities of its participating agencies.

The committee is attempting to prepare an interim report by September 2017 and a final report in the spring of 2018. It is using a process that includes opportunities for public input and review, consistent with the intent of the FACA. Its ability to keep to its timeline depends on being able to obtain public input in a timely fashion.

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