

Foreword

For the past thirty-five years, Federal, State, Tribal, and local governments have worked diligently to identify and address water pollution problems. This effort has made our drinking water safer, improved the quality of rivers, lakes, and coastal waters, and protected critical wetlands.

Today, the scientific consensus on climate change is changing our assumptions about water resources. Over the coming years, we in the United States can expect:

- shorelines to move as a result of sea level rise;
- changes in ocean chemistry to alter aquatic habitat and fisheries;
- warming water temperatures to change contaminant concentrations in water and alter aquatic system uses;
- new patterns of rainfall and snowfall to alter water supply for drinking and other uses leading to changes in pollution levels in aquatic systems; and
- more intense storms to threaten water infrastructure and increase polluted stormwater runoff.

There remains significant uncertainty about the exact scope and timing of climate change–related impacts on water resources, but the National Water Program and its partners need to assess emerging climate change information, evaluate potential impacts of climate change on water programs, and identify needed responses.

This ***National Water Program Strategy: Response to Climate Change*** is an initial effort to evaluate how best to meet our clean water and safe drinking water goals in the context of a changing climate. The ideas and response actions outlined here are the product of a cooperative effort among EPA water program managers in national and Regional offices. The EPA Office of Air and Radiation and Office of Research and Development provided valuable support for this work. A wide range of stakeholders participated in initial “listening session” meetings.

A changing climate in the years ahead will raise new challenges for improving the quality of the Nation’s waters. This ***Response to Climate Change*** starts us in the direction of understanding and addressing these challenges. I hope that you will join us in making this important work a success.

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