

Federal Forum on Environmental Collaboration and Conflict Resolution (ECCR) Meeting Notes

Thursday, June 15th, 2023, 10:30 AM – 12:00 PM Eastern Time

Welcome and Introductions

Stephanie Kavanaugh, Deputy Director of the John S. McCain III National Center for Environmental Conflict Resolution (National Center; a program of the Morris K. Udall and Stewart L. Udall Foundation), welcomed Forum members. In-person and virtual participants introduced themselves by name and agency. See [Appendix A](#) for a participant list.

General Updates from Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ)

CEQ shared that they have hired the following to their team: Emma Su, Ana Cohen, Lem Thomas, and Michael Drummond. CEQ is currently working closely with the Federal Permitting Improvement Steering Council (FPISC) and the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) on the Climate Action Plan and relevant guidance for agencies on incorporating and collaborating on critical infrastructure needs.

General Updates from the National Center

Brian Manwaring, National Center Director, announced that the ECCR Roster is now at <https://ecroster.org/>

The list of ECCR practitioners contains more than 300 names of facilitators and mediators that agencies can use as a resource.

Brian also mentioned that the National Center is working with the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) to conduct outreach for the [Continental Climate Change and Biodiversity Assessment](#), which is described in a [Federal Register Notice](#) released on May 8, 2023. The Notice seeks open-ended comments on the draft assessment prospectus (**due July 7, 2023**), nominations (including self-nominations) for assessment authors and participants (**nominations due July 7, 2023**), and expressions of interest to serve on the assessment Guidance Committee (**nominations due June 7, 2023**).

For questions on the Guidance Committee and Engagement sessions, email: GC@udall.gov

- For all other questions, email: biodiversityclimatechange@usgs.gov
- Public Comments and Nominations Register here: <https://contribute.globalchange.gov/>
- To receive updates on the biodiversity and climate change assessment events, join the [email list](#).

USGS is leading the Continental Assessment of Biodiversity and Climate Change in collaboration with Environment and Climate Change Canada and the National Commission for the Knowledge and Use of Biodiversity/Comisión Nacional para el Conocimiento y Uso de la Biodiversidad (CONABIO), and partnership with the Morris K. and Stewart L. Udall Foundation's John S. McCain III National Center for Environmental Conflict Resolution (National Center). Its scope includes the United States, its offshore Territories, Freely Associated States, Canada, and Mexico. The report will be developed by an Assessment team, including a Guidance Committee and Assessment Authors, who will represent a diversity of relevant technical, policy, and management expertise in biodiversity and climate change.

The assessment project will yield a report summarizing the state of knowledge concerning the linkages between **biodiversity and climate change** in the context of existing law and policy, aimed primarily at public-sector and private-sector decision-makers in all three countries. However, it will also be useful to

the general public and the scientific community. For more information, visit:

<https://www.usgs.gov/programs/climate-adaptation-science-centers/science/biodiversity-and-climate-change-assessment>

Steph informed the Forum that the National Center has received the agency submissions for the Annual ECCR Forum Report and a draft is in progress. Additionally, the Udall Foundation has moved offices in Tucson to 434 E University Blvd Suite 300, Tucson, AZ 85705. Steph welcomed the Forum members to visit the new office.

General Updates from Other Agencies

The Department of Energy (DOE) is co-hosting their annual environmental attorneys training on September 27, 2023. The topics will include a one-hour session on ECCR and tribal issues. The training is available virtually or in person. To register, please email Steven Miller at steven.miller@hq.doe.gov. CLE or CE credits may be available for attendees and certificates will be provided.

Discussion: Exploring Potential Development of a Community of Practice for Climate Collaborators

Objective: Obtain attendee input on possible development of a community of practice for climate collaborators.

Marci DuPraw, Senior Program Manager with the National Center, explained that two years ago the National Center published an assessment of opportunities to expand the use of ECCR for addressing climate change-related challenges. Since then, the National Center has developed a Climate Service Area focused on raising federal agency awareness of how and when ECCR may be an effective approach for addressing climate change-related challenges. To date, the National Center has documented 6 success stories and hosted 3 webinars. The National Center is currently working on an online toolbox, among other tools.

One tool the National Center is exploring is a Community of Practice (CoP) for climate collaborators and practitioners. The idea would be to support peer-to-peer capacity-building around the nuances of applying ECCR to climate change-related challenges. To explore the CoP idea, the National Center sent out a survey to federal colleagues to gauge need and interest and interviewed leaders of existing CoPs to elicit insights on how to develop a CoP. Rachel Hammelman, National Center, gave a synopsis of the survey results. Results can be found in [Appendix B](#).

Marci asked the ECCR Forum members the following discussion questions accompanied by responses from agencies:

Question 1

Are there certain skills or topics you think your team or agency needs to better understand in order to use environmental collaboration and conflict resolution to help address climate change-related challenges?

- One ECCR Forum member questioned if the climate change focus of this CoP crosses a line of impartiality within our work of ECCR.
- EPA mentioned that they are seeing an overlap between climate work and environmental justice work.
- It was emphasized that there is a need to better bolster ECCR capacity in this area.

- Another ECCR Forum member mentioned the need to focus on tools on decision making around uncertainty in the climate change context such as more tech platforms or capacity. This member also asked about the reach of the CoP and that targeted framing focusing on technical info, policies, or skills that agencies struggle with would be a good approach.

Question 2

Do you know of any existing Communities of Practice that already provide a platform for practitioner networking and peer-to-peer capacity building related to the use of ECCR to address climate change-related challenges?

- USACE mentioned their Silver Jackets Program. The Silver Jackets Program examines flood risk management, and the program is currently standing up a national climate resilience and equity working group. Catherine Rogan is the coordinator to contact at the Silver Jackets Program.
- Another Forum member mentioned reviewing ECCR projects that touch on climate change.
- A Forum member mentioned contacting Guillermo Mendoza at USACE. He may be interested in having discussions on this and doing deliberate work on climate impacts.
- Other Forum members mentioned that UNESCO has a climate risk and decision approach that is a collaborative, more bottom-up approach to planning and decision making which could be a good tool.
- Some ECCR Forum members are familiar with the American Association for Adaptation Professionals Community of Practice.

Question 3

To what degree and in what way might it be valuable to collaborate across agencies on supporting such a community of practice?

- A Forum member asked if the CoP would be intended to build capacity to support federal colleagues, and if so, how would it instill ECCR in climate issues and build capacity?
 - Marci clarified that the CoP would help people employ ECCR tools where it would make sense in climate projects. It could include federal practitioners as well as folks from other sectors.
 - Marci also explained that the CoP would provide skills and resources on best practices, how to overcome challenges, and ECCR models that others have used.
- Another Forum member asked who are the climate collaborators are in the federal government? Examples below were given:
 - ECCR Forum members
 - Mid-level managers who use ECCR practitioners
 - Staff developing a collaborative approach to projects using collaborative leadership skills
 - Staff who work in climate change
 - Staff who work in environment justice
- A Forum member suggested including all practitioners in ADR and conflict resolution work to contribute to the CoP not just those who practice ECCR.
- A Forum member explained that interagency collaboration would be beneficial in this CoP especially in working with Tribal Nations or other groups who might have limited resources or bandwidth to engage different agencies separately.

- A Forum member mentioned that the Landscape Conservation Collaboratives (LCCs) that were focused on collaborative, scientific research is similar to this CoP. This member cautioned that some felt burned out and that was one reason why the LCCs were eliminated. The CoP should emphasize the value added while focusing on practitioners and encouraging agency buy-in to enhance practitioner’s skills on working with technical folks, translating science, integrating into decision making, and involving stakeholder input. The lessons learned from the LCCs should be incorporated into the CoP as well as finding a way to have the CoP withstand administration changes.
- A Forum member asked how would this community of practice coordinate with the ongoing collaboration and consultation in the individual cases of NEPA or ESA?
 - One participant responded that encouraging collaboration and information sharing through the CoP could support such coordination.
- A Forum member suggested adjusting language from “climate change to “climate related impacts,” or “climate work” as “climate change” could feel limiting or biased to some. Climate impacts may not be related to climate change itself.
- An ECCR Forum member mentioned that climate change is multi-layered and there is a lot of crossover with other environmental and social issues. The member explained that solutions are being proposed to *address* climate change like offshore wind but there are also environmental justice communities struggling with the *effects* of climate change. This member mentioned that collecting resources on and including Indigenous practices would be helpful.

Marci and Rachel will integrate the input they received from the survey, interviews with CoP leaders, and this ECCR Forum discussion to figure out what is next. They will share updates in the future.

Closing Thoughts

The next meeting is projected to be in Fall 2023.

APPENDIX A: Meeting Attendees

Name	Agency
Carrie Greco	U.S. Army
Blaine Markuson	U.S. Army
Michelle Hilleary	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE)
Crorey Lawton	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE)
Jerald Thompson	U.S. Air Force
Lauren Dennis	Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ)
Megan Healy	Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ)
Seema Kakade	Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ)
Jomar Maldonado	Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ)
Aaron Stockel	Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ)
Emma Su	Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ)
Steven Miller	Department of Energy (DOE)
Sam Flanzer	Department of Energy (DOE)
Marcia deChadenedes	Department of the Interior (DOI)
William Hall	Department of the Interior (DOI)
Dana Freeman	Department of Homeland Security
Gina Langan Garcia	Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)
Josh Hurwitz	Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC)
Stephen Williams	Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC)
Amber Levofsky	Federal Permitting Improvement Steering Council (FPISC)
Vanessa Shoenfelt	Federal Transit Administration (FTA)
Frank Sprtel	National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)
Elisa Baca	Udall Foundation
Lauren Cordova	Udall Foundation
Seth Cohen	Udall Foundation, National Center
Marci DuPraw	Udall Foundation, National Center
Gwendolyn Franks	Udall Foundation, National Center
Rachel Hammelman	Udall Foundation, National Center
Stephanie Kavanaugh	Udall Foundation, National Center
Elyse Magen	Udall Foundation, National Center
Brian Manwaring	Udall Foundation, National Center
Ben Zukowski	Udall Foundation, National Center
Courtney Owen	Udall Foundation, National Center
Catherine Johnson	Veterans Affairs (VA)

APPENDIX B: Community of Practice SurveyMonkey Results

NCECR Climate Service Area Background Materials for ECCR Forum June 15, 2023

Exploring Development of a Climate Collaborators Community of Practice While the objective of the NCECR Climate Service Area as a whole is to raise Federal family awareness of how and when ECCR may be an effective approach for addressing climate change-related challenges, *the objective for a potential climate collaborators' community of practice would be to provide a forum for ECCR/climate practitioners to engage in networking and peer-to-peer capacity building on the application of their practitioner skills in the climate area.* NCECR is exploring this through a survey of senior Federal colleagues working in the climate arena, interviews with leaders of other communities of practice, and this discussion with members of the ECCR Forum.

Federal Survey Results

Results from our survey of 22 Federal colleagues yielded the following findings.

<p>Desired Focus of a Climate Collaborators Community of Practice</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1) Share experiences, lessons learned, and case studies;2) Define shared language; and3) Support processes that lead to real outcomes.	<p>Topics of Interest</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1) Transitioning from collaboration to action;2) Eliciting community perspectives (particularly vulnerable, underrepresented/ under-resourced, and Tribal communities);3) Accessing technical experts; and4) Increasing awareness of Federal agency roles and missions relating to climate change.
<p>Most Valued Activities</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1) Monthly/quarterly webinars (83%);2) Trainings (74%); and3) Development of a resource library (57%).	<p>Most Respondents Would:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1) Like to participate in community of practice events on a monthly or quarterly basis; and2) Determine participation based on focal topics and time, as opposed to group size.

Interviews with Community of Practice Leaders

NCECR also is interviewing leaders of communities of practice to elicit insights about effective strategies for developing such communities. To date, NCECR staff have conducted interviews with the following groups:

- > NCECR's Native American & Alaska Native Service Area Community of Practice
- > Mississippi-Alabama Sea Grant Consortium Climate and Resiliency Community of Practice
- > NOAA Climate CoP; Climate & Fisheries Adaptation Program CoP; and Climate Ecosystems & Fisheries Initiative
- > American Society of Adaptation Professionals

Common themes in the advice offered about developing a community of practice included:

1. A community of practice can be powerful way to “shift the needle” on a societal need.
2. A steering committee could be (would be?) very useful for charting strategic path forward.
3. Staff dedicated to supporting the community of practice varied for those we interviewed from 2 to 8 dedicated staff.
4. For the format of climate-related events held through their community of practices, interviewees vary in emphasis on virtual vs. in-person events and most use a mix.
5. Assess needs and seek feedback early and often on programmatic decisions (e.g., which climate-related topics to focus on).
6. Focus on cultivating a peer-to-peer learning environment (e.g., others' experiences, tools, and case studies), through monthly, quarterly, and annual meetings.
7. Offer a forum for connecting across different levels of governance and different academic (?) fields that have a shared interest (break down silos; understand science; coordinate on external messaging).
8. Support shared development and ownership of activities, goals, and topics to foster a sense of buy-in and vested interest.
9. Give CoP(?) members opportunities to tell their stories and gain recognition among peers.
10. Attend to inclusion of under-represented and under-resourced community practitioners.