

# 2026 AFWA CLIMATE ADAPTATION SURVEY

Executive Summary | State Fish & Wildlife Agencies



## Background

Aims of the AFWA Climate Adaptation Survey:

- I. Identify top climate concerns for state fish and wildlife agencies
- II. Track changes in how agencies approach adaptation
- III. Assess agency capacity and barriers to implementation to pinpoint critical needs

Survey results also guide efforts of the Climate Adaptation Committee and AFWA's Climate Adaptation Program.

In 2026, we received 70 responses representing fish and wildlife agencies in 48 US. states and territories and 2 Canadian provinces.

## Climate Concerns

Top climate impact concerns vary regionally.

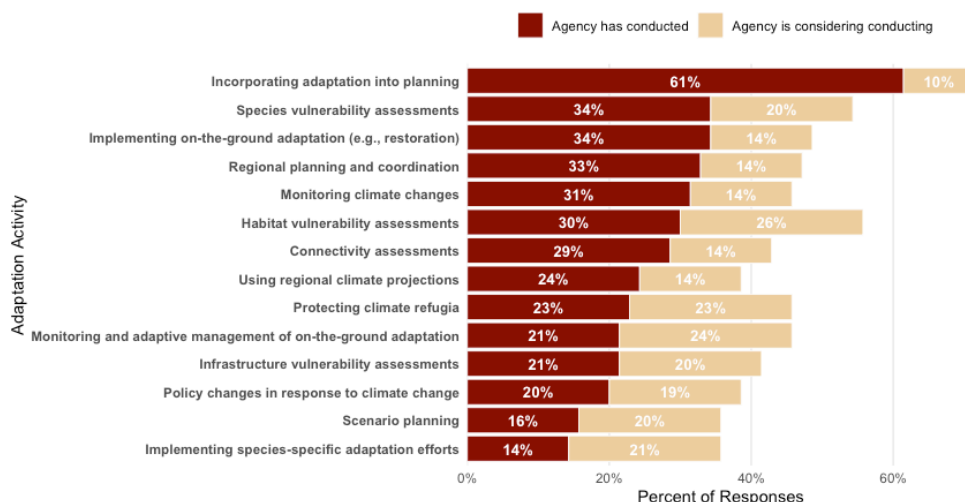
- **NEAFWA:** Invasive species, changing biodiversity, new or more prevalent diseases, changing population sizes
- **SEAFWA:** Invasive species, changing biodiversity, changing species distributions, new or more prevalent diseases
- **MAFWA:** Changing species distributions, changing hunting/fishing opportunities, invasive species, new or more prevalent diseases
- **WAFWA:** Changing population sizes, changing hunting/fishing opportunities, changing biodiversity, changing productivity

## Adaptation Planning

|                                              |                                     |                                                |
|----------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|
| <b>80%</b>                                   | <b>20%</b>                          | <b>42%</b>                                     |
| Incorporate climate change into formal plans | Have dedicated agency climate plans | Consider long-term planning horizons (>10 yrs) |

Incorporating climate change into decision making is the first step in meaningful progress on adaptation. A majority of states consider climate impacts; 18% have policy in place that directs this consideration. Most states are also formalizing these decisions through planning processes.

## Adaptation Activities



### Agencies are taking action

- Planning and assessment activities outpace implementation
- Species-specific efforts, such as conservation introductions, are gaining momentum
- Climate-informed policy changes target fishing (16%), hunting (11%), and nongame (3%) regulations

### Monitoring and adaptive management

Progress is being made on tracking and monitoring

- 21% monitor outcomes of actions that intentionally respond to climate change
- 53% track actions that have co-benefits for addressing climate change

## Identifying and Overcoming Barriers to Implementation

### Barriers to Implementation

- 1) Lack of capacity and funding
- 2) Other higher priorities
- 3) Lack of staff expertise
- 4) Lack of information about appropriate actions
- 5) Lack of political will

### Capacity

Agencies are increasing support for and prioritization of adaptation, often in response to observed damage from extreme events.

|                              |                                                  |                                                  |
|------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|
| <b>13%</b>                   | <b>40%</b>                                       | <b>79%</b>                                       |
| Have dedicated climate staff | Encourage staff to take climate related training | Provide staff time to incorporate climate change |

Specifically, 80% of respondents report an increase in leadership support for adaptation.

### Critical information needs

Agencies rely on collaboration with federal agencies and other organization to meet science and information needs.

Most needed resources are:

- ☐ Best management practices under expected future conditions
- ☐ Case studies of adaptation
- ☐ Climate impacts on species or habitats
- ☐ Training about on-the-ground implementation
- ☐ Training on decision support tools

## CONCLUSION

State fish and wildlife agencies demonstrate strong momentum in adaptation planning, while limited capacity, competing priorities, and critical information gaps constrain broad implementation. Leveraging partnerships to meet information needs, and increasing intra-agency climate communication are key to advancing adaptation and promoting resilience in fish and wildlife management.