

Secretary Salazar Announces University of Alaska as Host of Nation's First Regional Climate Science Center

WASHINGTON, D.C.—Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar announced today that the Department of the Interior has selected the University of Alaska as the first of eight planned regional Climate Science Centers in the nation.

“With rapidly melting Arctic-sea ice and permafrost, and threats to the survival of Native Alaskan coastal communities, Alaska is ground zero for climate change,” said Secretary Salazar. “We must put science to work to help us adjust to the impacts of climate change on Alaska’s resources and peoples.”

In addition to the Alaska region, Climate Science Centers will be selected in seven additional regions throughout the country as directed by a 2009 Secretarial Order on climate change.

Secretary Salazar also announced today that the Department will be seeking grant proposals for four more Climate Science Centers in the next few weeks-- including centers in the Northwest, Southeast, Southwest and North Central regions.

Joining Secretary Salazar in today’s teleconference were Deputy Secretary David J. Hayes and Dr. Marcia McNutt, Director of the U.S. Geological Survey, which runs the existing National Climate Change and Wildlife Science Center.

“Regional Climate Science Centers and their networks will provide science about climate change impacts, help land managers adapt to the impacts, and engage the public through education initiatives,” Secretary Salazar said. “In short, Climate Science Centers will better connect our scientists with land managers and the public.”

In looking at criteria for choosing Climate Science Center locations, Secretary Salazar noted that the Department determined “the University of Alaska is uniquely qualified to serve as host for the Alaska region both because of its location and expertise.”

“Alaska has tens of millions of acres of public lands under Interior’s jurisdiction,” Secretary Salazar also noted. “A strong functioning partnership between federal and state agencies, Native communities, and other stakeholders will enable the Alaska Climate Science Center to hit the ground running,” the Secretary said. Interior hopes to have the new climate science center at the University of Alaska formally established in Anchorage within six to eight weeks.

On September 14, 2009, with Secretarial Order No. 3289, Secretary Salazar put into action the Department’s first-ever coordinated strategy to address current and future impacts of climate change on America’s land, water, ocean, fish, wildlife, and cultural resources.

The plan called for establishing not only the regional “Climate Science Centers” but also a network of “Landscape Conservation Cooperatives” that will engage federal agencies, local and state partners, and the public in crafting practical, landscape-level strategies for managing climate change impacts within the eight regions.

Within their respective regions, these cooperatives will focus on impacts that typically extend beyond the borders of any single national wildlife refuge, national park or Bureau of Land Management unit—such as the effects of climate change on wildlife migration patterns, wildfire risk, drought, or invasive species.

Salazar said that together the Climate Science Centers and the Landscape Conservation Cooperatives form “the cornerstone of our strategy.” The Climate Science Centers will recruit staff from USGS and partner organizations, as well as cadres of scientists and information specialists.

To learn more about this our climate change strategy, visit our new website at <http://doi.gov/whatwedo/climate/strategy/index.cfm>. This site features interactive maps of Climate Science Centers and Landscape Conservation Cooperatives, as well as additional details on the services they will provide.