

MARCO Climate Change Action Team: NALCC Proposed Projects (October 1, 2015 – September 15, 2016)

1) National Wildlife Federation (NWF) - Facilitation of the Improved Use and Understanding of Natural and Nature-Based Features (NNBF) in the Mid-Atlantic (\$139,840)

NWF will seek to evaluate NNBF in light of climate change, specifically addressing the following questions

- How will NNBF respond to sea-level rise and climate change impacts?
- What are the strengths and limitations of NNBF in reducing upland impacts?
- How can NNBF be modified or adapted over time with climate change?

Project Objectives:

- Deepen and broaden stakeholders' understanding around the appropriate use of NNBF and increase awareness and coordination across organizations, agencies and states.
- Build local decision makers' knowledge on the economic, ecologic and societal associated with the use of NNBF as climate change adaptation.
- Provide guidance on a coordinated, regional approach to using NNBF to build climate resilience that can be employed and adapted at the local and state levels.

The first phase of the project will focus on collecting content for the workshops to be held in the second phase. This will be accomplished by a combination of background research, information gathering from the regional and (where appropriate) national NNBF community, and regional stakeholder interviews. The content collected by the NWF during this first phase will be used to inform and structure the workshops in the following phase. The second phase of the project will consist of two, two-day regional workshops that will bring together a variety of stakeholders, including representatives from federal agencies, local and state governments, the insurance sector, coastal engineers, NGOs and others to find answers and solutions to the most important questions on and challenges to implementing NNBF in the Mid-Atlantic. These workshops will focus on topic areas and specific questions that are crucial to furthering NNBF across the region. Workshops will consist of roughly 50 participants in order to keep the workshops relatively intimate and focus on getting key decision makers in the room. Number of participants will be further refined during the stakeholder identification process and could slightly increase or decrease. An interactive webinar will also be made available for those who wish to participate, but cannot travel to the workshop.

2) Environmental Law Institute (ELI) - Developing Wetland Restoration Priorities for Climate Risk Reduction and Resilience in the MARCO Region (\$98,937)

Science-based tools that prioritize wetland and aquatic resource sites for conservation, restoration, and compensatory mitigation activities have been developed and integrated into decision-making systems in many states. The restoration of these sites can maximize the delivery of ecosystem service benefits such as water quality and flood protection for coastal communities.

However, most of these priority-setting systems do not incorporate climate science and coastal resilience goals in their models. Working closely with the MARCO states, and building upon existing prioritization tools in use in those states and elsewhere, the Environmental Law Institute (ELI) will develop a regional approach that can be used consistently and reliably to identify regional wetland restoration priorities, including priorities for other wetland-related natural and nature-based features (NNBFs) for federal and state programs to achieve risk reduction and associated climate resilience outcomes. The project will take into account the variability among MARCO states, including the availability of wetland restoration opportunities given existing development.

The project will achieve the following objectives:

- Identify the science-based wetlands and waters priority-setting tools already in use that can aid in resilience, including suitable tools used outside the MARCO region.
- Determine the overlaps between priority-setting methodologies for wetlands and waters and those for coastal resilience.
- Identify the climate- and resilience-related data gaps in current priority-setting methodologies and the data sources that may inform the development of new tools.
- Identify opportunities for adoption of, and modifications or additions to, existing priority-setting tools to incorporate climate change and coastal resilience factors.
- Create a framework to use available tools to identify which Mid-Atlantic wetland areas are most vulnerable to climate impacts, which areas would be priorities for restoration based on risk reduction, and long-term wetland restoration targets given climate impacts.
- Demonstrate how the framework may be potentially applied in cooperation with a MARCO state.