Freshwater Conservation Canada

Climate Change Policy

Policy No: 25-01

Policy Title: Climate Change

Policy Statement: By working to restore ecosystem function, Freshwater Conservation Canada helps communities and freshwater ecosystems adapt to and improve resilience against the impacts of climate change.

Principles Applied:

- Rising global temperatures caused by post-industrial increases in carbon in the atmosphere will have various impacts on communities and freshwater ecosystems.
- These impacts occur at different temporal and spatial scales, and the rate of change is occurring faster than many systems, species, and populations can adapt.
- Climate change is currently causing, and is expected to continue to result in impacts that include extreme weather, warming freshwater systems, changing biotic communities, threats to water security, changes in the timing of seasonal events, and others.
- Coldwater systems and coldwater species are particularly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change.
- The impacts of climate change on freshwater biodiversity are exacerbated by losses in habitat connectivity, habitat degradation, introductions of invasive species and pathogens, and other human-caused stressors.
- The causes and effects of human-caused climate change are well documented in the scientific literature, which continues to be advanced.

Policy Rationale and Considerations:

Despite efforts by governments, industry, businesses, communities, and individuals to reach “net zero” or carbon neutrality (generally described as balancing carbon emissions with carbon storage), the impacts of climate change will continue for decades or centuries to come, even if or when net-zero is achieved. Freshwater Conservation Canada tackles climate change by improving ecosystem resilience, helping communities and ecosystems adapt to the impacts of climate change, and

using nature-based restoration to sequester carbon in nature. The benefits of freshwater ecosystem restoration work completed by Freshwater Conservation Canada have localized benefits to communities by mitigating the impact of flood, drought, and fire; improving water quality and water security; and maintaining or improving habitat for fish and wildlife. Healthy freshwater ecosystems provide a range of ecosystem services, which are the direct and indirect benefits that humans derive (examples: erosion control, clean air and water, food availability, etc.).

Objectives of Policy Statement:

Climate change shall be woven into all decision making by Freshwater Conservation Canada including the implementation if programs and projects, messaging, and day-to-day operations.

Implications to Organization:

Along with the delivery and implementation of sound programs and projects that address the impacts of climate change, Freshwater Conservation Canada will take steps to minimize the carbon footprint of operations where feasible. Staff and chapters will strive to stay up to date on the science and best practices of freshwater ecosystem restoration, nature-based solutions, carbon sequestration in freshwater ecosystems, climate science and modelling, science communication, implications of climate change on freshwater biodiversity, and species at risk recovery to guide decision making and program delivery.

Delivery:

Staff and chapters will use audience-appropriate terminology when communicating about climate change and strive to find common ground and shared goals to advance programs and projects. The organization's work continues to be action-oriented, with a focus on nature-based solutions, and improving and restoring freshwater ecosystem function. To promote the long term sustainability of programs and projects, and responsible allocation of resources, decision making and program delivery requires pragmatism and consideration of climate projections and models to ensure long term viability of projects give projected impacts of climate change (example: is a particular tree or fish species expected to survive in a particular location given projected future climatic conditions, landscape connectivity, land-use, etc.).

Effective Date:

Last Board Approval Date: