

117TH CONGRESS  
2D SESSION

# S. 3621

To direct the Secretary of the Interior to establish a National Climate Adaptation Science Center and Regional Climate Adaptation Science Centers to respond to the effects of extreme weather events and climate trends, and for other purposes.

---

## IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

FEBRUARY 9, 2022

Ms. HIRONO (for herself, Mr. WHITEHOUSE, Mr. HEINRICH, Mrs. MURRAY, Ms. SMITH, and Ms. WARREN) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Environment and Public Works

---

## A BILL

To direct the Secretary of the Interior to establish a National Climate Adaptation Science Center and Regional Climate Adaptation Science Centers to respond to the effects of extreme weather events and climate trends, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*  
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Climate Adaptation  
5 Science Centers Act” or the “CASC Act”.

1 **SEC. 2. DEFINITIONS.**

2 In this Act:

3 (1) ADAPTATION.—The term “adaptation”  
4 means—

5 (A) the process of adjustment to—

6 (i) actual or expected climate; and

7 (ii) the effects of extreme weather, cli-  
8 mate trends, and climate variability; and

9 (B) protection, management, and conserva-  
10 tion efforts designed to maintain or enhance the  
11 ability of people, fish, wildlife, plants, land, eco-  
12 systems, and water of the United States to  
13 withstand, adjust to, or recover from the effects  
14 of extreme weather, climate trends, and climate  
15 variability.

16 (2) COMMITTEE.—The term “Committee”  
17 means the Advisory Committee on Climate and Nat-  
18 ural Resource Sciences established under section  
19 6(b)(1).

20 (3) CONSORTIUM INSTITUTION.—The term  
21 “consortium institution” means an institution of  
22 higher education, State cooperative institution, State  
23 agency, Indian Tribe, Tribal College or University,  
24 historically Black college or university, Tribal orga-  
25 nization, Native Hawaiian organization, minority-  
26 serving institution, or other educational institution

or organization, Federal agency, public or private organization, individual, or any other party within each Regional Center other than the United States Geological Survey and the host institution.

(4) CULTURAL RESOURCE.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—The term “cultural resource” means a feature or value relating to cultural heritage.

(B) INCLUSIONS.—The term “cultural resource” includes—

(i) a biological species with cultural heritage or ceremonial importance; and

(ii) a historic or prehistoric site, trail, structure, inscription, artwork, or artifact that is—

(I) located on Federal land; or

(II) representative of the culture of Indian Tribes, Native Hawaiians, or Native American Pacific Islanders.

(5) DEPARTMENT.—The term “Department” means the Department of the Interior.

(6) ECOSYSTEM SERVICE.—The term “ecosystem service” means a benefit that an ecosystem provides humans and human society, including clean

1 air, clean water, and other economically important  
2 services.

3 (7) HISTORICALLY BLACK COLLEGE OR UNI-  
4 VERSITY.—The term “historically Black colleges or  
5 university” has the meaning given the term “part B  
6 institution” in section 322 of the Higher Education  
7 Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1061).

8 (8) HOST INSTITUTION.—The term “host insti-  
9 tution” means the non-Federal lead organization  
10 within each Regional Center.

11 (9) INDIAN TRIBE.—The term “Indian Tribe”  
12 has the meaning given the term in section 4 of the  
13 Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance  
14 Act (25 U.S.C. 5304).

15 (10) INSTITUTION OF HIGHER EDUCATION.—  
16 The term “institution of higher education” has the  
17 meaning given the term in section 101(a) of the  
18 Higher Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1001(a)).

19 (11) MINORITY-SERVING INSTITUTION.—The  
20 term “minority-serving institution” means an insti-  
21 tution described in paragraphs (2) through (7) of  
22 section 371(a) of the Higher Education Act of 1965  
23 (20 U.S.C. 1067q(a)).

1           (12) NATIONAL CENTER.—The term “National  
2       Center” means the National Climate Adaptation  
3       Science Center established under section 3(a).

4           (13) NATIVE AMERICAN PACIFIC ISLANDER.—  
5       The term “Native American Pacific Islander” means  
6       any descendent of the aboriginal people of any island  
7       in the Pacific Ocean that is a territory of the United  
8       States.

9           (14) NATIVE HAWAIIAN.—The term “Native  
10      Hawaiian” means any individual who is a descend-  
11      ant of the aboriginal people who, prior to 1778, oc-  
12      cupied and exercised sovereignty in the area that  
13      now constitutes the State of Hawaii.

14          (15) NATIVE HAWAIIAN ORGANIZATION.—The  
15      term “Native Hawaiian organization” means any or-  
16      ganization that—

17            (A) serves and represents the interests of  
18      Native Hawaiians;

19            (B) has as a primary and stated purpose  
20      the provision of services to Native Hawaiians;  
21      and

22            (C) has expertise in Native Hawaiian af-  
23      fairs, including—

24                (i) the Office of Hawaiian Affairs; and

1 (ii) Hui Malama I Na Kupuna O Ha-  
 2 wai'i Nei.

3 (16) NATURAL RESOURCES.—The term “nat-  
 4 ural resources” has the meaning given the term in  
 5 section 11.14 of title 43, Code of Federal Regula-  
 6 tions (or successor regulations).

7 (17) REGIONAL CENTER.—The term “Regional  
 8 Center” means a Regional Climate Adaptation  
 9 Science Center established under section 3(a).

10 (18) SECRETARY.—The term “Secretary”  
 11 means the Secretary of the Interior, acting through  
 12 the Director of the United States Geological Survey.

13 (19) STATE.—The term “State” means—

14 (A) each of the several States of the  
 15 United States;

16 (B) the District of Columbia;

17 (C) American Samoa;

18 (D) Guam;

19 (E) the Commonwealth of the Northern  
 20 Mariana Islands;

21 (F) the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico;

22 and

23 (G) the United States Virgin Islands.

24 (20) TRIBAL COLLEGE OR UNIVERSITY.—The  
 25 term “Tribal College or University” has the meaning

given the term in section 316(b) of the Higher Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1059c(b)).

(21) TRIBAL ORGANIZATION.—The term “Tribal organization” means—

(A) the recognized governing body of any Indian Tribe; or

(B) any legally established organization of members of an Indian Tribe that—

(i) is controlled, sanctioned, or chartered by the recognized governing body of an Indian Tribe; or

(ii)(I) is democratically elected by the adult members of the Indian community to be served by the organization; and

(II) includes the maximum participation of members of Indian Tribes in all phases of the activities of the organization.

**SEC. 3. ESTABLISHMENT OF THE NATIONAL AND REGIONAL CLIMATE ADAPTATION SCIENCE CENTERS.**

(a) ESTABLISHMENT.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary, in collaboration with States, Indian Tribes, and other partner organizations, shall establish a program, to be known as the “National and Regional Climate Adaptation Science Centers”—

1 (A) to provide scientific expertise to man-  
2 agers of natural resources, cultural resources,  
3 and ecosystem services for the purpose of in-  
4 forming decisions that aid adaptation to a  
5 changing climate and extreme weather events;  
6 and

7 (B) that includes a National Climate Ad-  
8 aptation Science Center and Regional Climate  
9 Adaptation Science Centers, which shall be ad-  
10 ministered by the United States Geological Sur-  
11 vey.

12 (2) CHIEF; DIRECTORS.—

13 (A) CHIEF.—The Chief of the National  
14 Center shall be an employee of the United  
15 States Geological Survey.

16 (B) DIRECTORS.—

17 (i) IN GENERAL.—Each Regional Cen-  
18 ter shall have a Federal Director and a  
19 Host Institution Director who shall work  
20 cooperatively to further the mission of the  
21 Regional Center.

22 (ii) FEDERAL DIRECTOR.—A Federal  
23 Director of a Regional Center shall be an  
24 employee of the United States Geological

1                   Survey who reports directly to the Chief of  
2                   the National Center.

3           (b) DUTIES OF THE NATIONAL CENTER.—In collabo-  
4 ration with Federal agencies, States, Indian Tribes, Tribal  
5 organizations, Native Hawaiians, Native Hawaiian organi-  
6 zations, Native American Pacific Islanders, and other  
7 partner organizations, the National Center shall—

8           (1) serve as the national office for the Regional  
9           Centers;

10          (2) provide leadership and guidance on adminis-  
11 tration, partnerships, information management, and  
12 communications;

13          (3) develop and facilitate coordination among  
14 the Regional Centers;

15          (4) coordinate with other Federal agencies  
16 working on similar research and activities;

17          (5) conduct research on cross-regional and na-  
18 tional science priorities;

19          (6) support Regional Centers that—

20               (A) are hosted at an institution of higher  
21 education, or a consortium of institutions of  
22 higher education or other research institutions,  
23 within the region of each Regional Center;

24               (B) are collaborations between the Federal  
25 Director and the Host Institution Director and

1 the staff of the Federal Director and the Host  
2 Institution Director to address the broad sci-  
3 entific mission and goals defined by the Na-  
4 tional Center—

5 (i) in a manner that is relevant to the  
6 specific geographic region of the Regional  
7 Center; and

8 (ii) in cooperation with State and  
9 local governments, Indian Tribes, Tribal  
10 organizations, Native Hawaiians, Native  
11 Hawaiian organizations, Native American  
12 Pacific Islanders, and other entities within  
13 that region;

14 (C) promote research, education, training,  
15 and advisory service activities and broad and  
16 prompt dissemination of knowledge and tech-  
17 niques; and

18 (D) receive funding at the host institution  
19 through cooperative agreements, contracts, and  
20 grants under section 4; and

21 (7) acting through the Chief of the National  
22 Center, with respect to the Regional Centers—

23 (A)(i) evaluate and assess the performance  
24 of the programs of Regional Centers every 5  
25 years, using the priorities, guidelines, and quali-

1           fications established by the Secretary under this  
2           section; and

3                 (ii) based on the evaluation and assess-  
4           ment under clause (i), determine if the pro-  
5           grams of the Regional Center are well managed  
6           and carry out high-quality research, education,  
7           training, and advisory service activities; and

8                 (B) subject to the availability of appropria-  
9           tions, allocate funding among Regional Centers  
10          for—

11                         (i) the conduct of regionally relevant  
12           research, education, training, and advisory  
13           service activities in each of the regions;

14                         (ii) encouraging collaborations among  
15           Regional Centers to address regional and  
16           national priorities established under this  
17           section;

18                         (iii) ensuring successful implementa-  
19           tion and operation of Regional Centers;

20                         (iv) to the maximum extent consistent  
21           with other provisions of this Act, the provi-  
22           sion of a stable base of funding in support  
23           of the Regional Centers; and

24                         (v) the encouragement and promotion  
25           of coordination and cooperation between

1 the research, education, training, and advi-  
2 sory service activities of the Department  
3 and the activities of the host and consor-  
4 tium institutions.

5 (c) AUTHORITIES OF THE NATIONAL CENTER.—The  
6 National Center may—

7 (1) procure the services of appropriate public  
8 and private agencies and institutions and other  
9 qualified persons to conduct the work of the Na-  
10 tional Center; and

11 (2) operate and fund a network of not fewer  
12 than 9 Regional Centers that shall address the im-  
13 pacts of climate trends and variability, including ex-  
14 treme weather events, on natural resources, cultural  
15 resources, and ecosystem services.

16 (d) DESIGNATION OF THE REGIONAL CENTERS.—

17 (1) EXISTING REGIONAL CENTER DESIGNA-  
18 TIONS.—Any institution or consortium of institu-  
19 tions designated as the host institution of a Regional  
20 Center before the date of enactment of this Act shall  
21 not have to reapply for designation as a Regional  
22 Center if the Chief of the National Center deter-  
23 mines that the institution or consortium of institu-  
24 tions meets the guidelines established under para-  
25 graph (2).

1           (2) REVIEWS OF THE REGIONAL CENTERS.—

2           The Chief of the National Center, in consultation  
3           with the Committee, shall establish guidelines relat-  
4           ing to the activities and responsibilities of the Re-  
5           gional Centers, including—

6                   (A) requirements for the merit review of  
7                   the Regional Centers;

8                   (B) guidelines for the circumstances in  
9                   which a host institution may be discontinued as  
10                  a host institution;

11                  (C) the schedule for merit reviews, in ac-  
12                  cordance with scheduling criteria developed  
13                  under this paragraph; and

14                  (D) the process to select a new host insti-  
15                  tution.

16           (3) CHANGES TO CONSORTIUM INSTITUTIONS.—

17           The Chief of the National Center, in consultation  
18           with the Federal Director and Host Institution Di-  
19           rector of a Regional Center, may add or remove a  
20           consortium institution at any time to address re-  
21           gional and national priorities established under this  
22           section.

23           (4) NONAPPLICABILITY OF FACA.—A com-  
24           mittee, subcommittee, or working group appointed  
25           by a Federal Director of a Regional Center shall not

1 be subject to the Federal Advisory Committee Act (5  
2 U.S.C. App.).

3 (e) DUTIES OF THE REGIONAL CENTERS.—In col-  
4 laboration with Federal and State natural resources agen-  
5 cies and departments, Indian Tribes, Tribal organizations,  
6 Native Hawaiians, Native Hawaiian organizations, Native  
7 American Pacific Islanders, Tribal Colleges or Univer-  
8 sities, historically Black Colleges or Universities, minority-  
9 serving institutions, institutions of higher education, other  
10 research or educational institutions, and other partner or-  
11 ganizations, a Regional Center shall develop research, edu-  
12 cation, training, and advisory service priorities regarding  
13 the impacts of climate trends and variability on natural  
14 and cultural resource management in the region covered  
15 by the Regional Center for the purpose of climate adapta-  
16 tion.

17 **SEC. 4. GENERAL AUTHORITY TO ENTER INTO CONTRACTS,**  
18 **GRANTS, COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS, AND**  
19 **INTERAGENCY AGREEMENTS.**

20 (a) AUTHORITY.—

21 (1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary may enter  
22 into contracts, grants, cooperative agreements, and  
23 interagency agreements with a host institution or  
24 consortium institution to further the research, edu-  
25 cation, training, and advisory service activities of the

1 Department or partners of the Department relating  
2 to impacts of climate trends and variability.

3 (2) EFFECT.—The authority under paragraph  
4 (1)—

5 (A) supplements any other authority pro-  
6 vided under any other law relating to the De-  
7 partment; and

8 (B) does not limit or repeal any existing  
9 authorities of the Department.

10 (b) LEGAL INSTRUMENTS.—The Secretary may use  
11 a contract, grant, cooperative agreement, or interagency  
12 agreement as the legal instrument reflecting a relationship  
13 between the Secretary and a host institution or consortium  
14 institution to carry out the duties under section 3 without  
15 regard to—

16 (1) any requirements for competition;

17 (2) section 6101 of title 41, United States  
18 Code; or

19 (3) subsections (a) and (b) of section 3324 of  
20 title 31, United States Code.

21 (c) PARTICIPATION OF FEDERAL AGENCIES.—Not-  
22 withstanding any other provision of law, any Federal  
23 agency may participate in a cooperative agreement under  
24 this section by contributing funds through the National  
25 Center or otherwise if the parties to the cooperative agree-

1 ment mutually agree that the objectives of the agreement  
2 would further the authorized programs of the contributing  
3 agency.

4 (d) TITLE TO ASSETS.—The Secretary may vest in  
5 a contractor or recipient title to expendable and non-  
6 expendable assets, including equipment, supplies, and  
7 other tangible personal property, if—

8 (1) the contractor or recipient purchases the as-  
9 sets with funds from a contract, grant, cooperative  
10 agreement, or interagency agreement; and

11 (2) the Secretary considers the vesting of title  
12 to be in furtherance of the research, education,  
13 training, and advisory service objectives of the De-  
14 partment.

15 (e) APPROVAL REQUIRED.—In any case in which a  
16 contract is let or a grant is made to an organization to  
17 perform services benefitting more than 1 Indian Tribe, the  
18 approval of each Indian Tribe shall be a prerequisite to  
19 the letting or making of the contract or grant.

20 **SEC. 5. INTERAGENCY COOPERATION.**

21 Each department, agency, or other instrumentality of  
22 the Federal Government that is engaged in or concerned  
23 with, or that has authority over, matters relating to nat-  
24 ural resources, cultural resources, ecosystem services, or  
25 climate variability or change, including all member agen-

1 cies of the United States Global Change Research Pro-  
2 gram—

3           (1) may make available, on a reimbursable  
4 basis or otherwise, any personnel (with the consent  
5 of the personnel and without prejudice to the posi-  
6 tion and rating of the personnel), service, or facility  
7 that the Chief of the National Center determines to  
8 be necessary to carry out any provision of section 3;

9           (2) shall, on a written request from the Sec-  
10 retary, furnish any available data or other informa-  
11 tion that the Secretary determines to be necessary to  
12 carry out any provision of section 3;

13           (3) shall cooperate with the National Center,  
14 Regional Centers, and duly authorized officials of  
15 the National Center or Regional Centers; and

16           (4) may transfer budgetary resources or other-  
17 wise enter into interagency agreements, including for  
18 funding, facilities, computational resources, data, or  
19 other tangible or intangible resources, between the  
20 National Center or Regional Centers to aid collabo-  
21 rative work among Federal agencies, if approved by  
22 the Chief of the National Center and the head of the  
23 applicable Federal agency.

1 **SEC. 6. COMMITTEES.**

2 (a) **AUTHORITY TO ESTABLISH COMMITTEES.**—The  
 3 Chief of the National Center may establish committees or  
 4 working groups and procedures to facilitate public partici-  
 5 pation in the advisory process, such as a national advisory  
 6 committee for the National Center, stakeholder advisory  
 7 committees and science implementation panels for the Re-  
 8 gional Centers, and working groups for review of competi-  
 9 tive or noncompetitive proposals.

10 (b) **ADVISORY COMMITTEE.**—

11 (1) **ESTABLISHMENT.**—Not later than 180 days  
 12 after the date of enactment of this Act and pursuant  
 13 to the Federal Advisory Committee Act (5 U.S.C.  
 14 App.), the Secretary shall establish an Advisory  
 15 Committee on Climate and Natural Resource  
 16 Sciences.

17 (2) **MEMBERS.**—The Committee shall have not  
 18 fewer than 15 members, including members that are  
 19 employees of or represent the following:

20 (A) An Indian Tribe.

21 (B) A Tribal organization.

22 (C) A Native Hawaiian organization.

23 (D) A State or local government.

24 (E) A Host institution of a Regional Cen-  
 25 ter.

26 (F) A nongovernmental organization.

1 (G) An academic institution.

2 (H) An organization of the private sector.

3 (3) CHAIR; VICE CHAIR.—

4 (A) CHAIR.—The Secretary shall appoint a  
5 Committee Chair from among the members of  
6 the Committee.

7 (B) VICE CHAIR.—The Committee shall se-  
8 lect 1 voting member of the Committee to serve  
9 as the Vice Chair, who shall act as Chair in the  
10 absence or incapacity of the Chair.

11 (4) DUTIES.—The Committee shall identify and  
12 recommend priorities for ongoing research needs on  
13 the issues described in section 3(e) to inform the re-  
14 search priorities of the National Center.

15 (5) TERM.—

16 (A) IN GENERAL.—Except as provided in  
17 subparagraph (C), the term of office of a voting  
18 member of the Committee shall be not more  
19 than 3 years.

20 (B) CONSECUTIVE TERMS.—No member of  
21 the Committee may serve more than 2 consecu-  
22 tive terms as a voting member of the Com-  
23 mittee.

1 (C) EXTENSION.—The Chair may extend  
2 the term of office of a voting member of the  
3 Committee by not more than 1 year.

4 (D) PARTIAL TERM.—A member that is  
5 appointed to a partial or full term on the Com-  
6 mittee may be reappointed for 1 additional full  
7 term as a member on the Committee.

8 (6) NOMINATIONS.—Not less frequently than  
9 once each year, the Secretary shall publish a notice  
10 in the Federal Register soliciting nominations for  
11 membership on the Committee.

12 (c) COMMITTEES; WORKING GROUPS.—

13 (1) IN GENERAL.—At the direction of the Sec-  
14 retary, the Chief of the National Center may estab-  
15 lish committees or working groups to provide input  
16 on the science priorities, implementation of science  
17 programs, review of competitive and noncompetitive  
18 proposals, and evaluation of processes, procedures,  
19 and outcomes of the National Center and the Re-  
20 gional Centers.

21 (2) MEMBERS.—A committee or working group  
22 established under paragraph (1) shall, to the extent  
23 practicable, include members from the Federal Gov-  
24 ernment, State government, institutions of higher  
25 education, the private sector, nongovernmental orga-

1 nizations, Indian Tribes, Tribal organizations, and  
2 Native Hawaiian organizations.

3 (3) PUBLIC PARTICIPATION.—The Secretary  
4 may establish procedures to facilitate public partici-  
5 pation in the advisory process under this subsection,  
6 including—

7 (A) providing advance notice of meetings;

8 (B) providing adequate opportunity for  
9 public input and comment;

10 (C) maintaining appropriate records; and

11 (D) making a record of the proceedings of  
12 meetings available for public inspection.

13 (4) IMPLEMENTATION; AVAILABILITY OF  
14 RECORDS.—The Secretary shall ensure that—

15 (A) the procedures described in paragraph  
16 (3) are adopted and implemented; and

17 (B) the records described in paragraph (3)  
18 are accurately maintained and available for  
19 public inspection.

20 (5) NONAPPLICABILITY OF FACA.—

21 (A) IN GENERAL.—A committee or work-  
22 ing group established under paragraph (1) shall  
23 not be considered to be an advisory committee  
24 under the Federal Advisory Committee Act (5  
25 U.S.C. App.).

1                   (B) ADVICE.—Seeking advice and input  
2                   under paragraph (1) shall not be subject to the  
3                   Federal Advisory Committee Act (5 U.S.C.  
4                   App.).

5 **SEC. 7. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.**

6           There are authorized to be appropriated to the Sec-  
7   retary to carry out this Act—

- 8                   (1) \$97,000,000 for fiscal year 2023;  
9                   (2) \$109,000,000 for fiscal year 2024;  
10                  (3) \$121,000,000 for fiscal year 2025;  
11                  (4) \$133,000,000 for fiscal year 2026; and  
12                  (5) \$145,000,000 for fiscal year 2027.

○