



EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
OFFICE OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY POLICY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20502

May 18, 2021

J. Michael Kuperberg, Ph.D.
Executive Director
U.S. Global Change Research Program

Dear Dr. Kuperberg,

In 1990, Congress established the U.S. Global Change Research Program (USGCRP) and authorized it to develop and coordinate “a comprehensive and integrated United States research program which will assist the Nation and the world to understand, assess, predict, and respond to human-induced and natural processes of global change.”

Over thirty years, the USGCRP has successfully coordinated climate research activities across 13 agencies and through six administrations, delivering timely, non-partisan scientific information. This program has provided the United States and the world with path-breaking research that underpins our understanding of the climate system and the extent of the climate crisis facing the nation and the world. That science, synthesized in the four National Climate Assessments that are overseen by the USGCRP, has set the stage for the urgently ambitious climate agenda of the Biden Administration.

You played a key role in these successes as the USGCRP Executive Director for six of those years. Today, I offer heartfelt thanks to you, the Subcommittee on Global Change Research, its agencies, and your USGCRP colleagues for your sterling efforts to understand key dimensions of global change and share that scientific knowledge with decision-makers and the public.

I also write to welcome you back as Executive Director of USGCRP and to call on you, the USGCRP, and its agencies to accelerate the development and delivery of actionable information to guide decisions during this crisis.

As the Nation seeks to transition to a low-carbon economy and enhance resilience to climate changes already underway, leaders and citizens need information. As the Nation seeks to tackle the climate crisis while advancing social justice and equity, creating high quality jobs, and protecting the natural world upon which human well-being depends, leaders and citizens need information. As the Nation seeks to regain an international leadership role in understanding and responding to global changes, leaders and citizens need information.

We are at a critical juncture. Smart action, informed by science, is paramount. The role of USGCRP has never been more important. Therefore, business-as-usual will not suffice. Now is the time to enhance the ambition of USGCRP as it develops the next *Decadal Strategic Plan*, delivers the fifth *National Climate Assessment*, and produces the next *Our Changing Planet* report to Congress.

As a research program, USGCRP should retain an intense focus on understanding the fundamental aspects of the Earth system and the consequences of global changes to society. As we enter a critical

stage of policy and action, the Program must also emphasize research that informs policies to reduce and prevent emissions as well as adapt to changes already underway.

I therefore challenge the USGCRP to accelerate action on two fronts—advancing science to increase our knowledge, especially on societally relevant topics, and ensuring that knowledge is understandable, accessible and useable to the key stakeholders—from fishermen, farmers and ranchers to mayors and governors, from small business leaders to industry, from Wall Street to Main Street.

I urge you to push the frontiers of knowledge to deliver timely information in these key areas:

Advancing Science - Improving our understanding of the Earth system and focusing on changes that pose the greatest risks and opportunities to society. While science has made great strides in understanding Earth system processes, critically important topics with enormous societal consequences require increased resolution and specificity. For example, where are the tipping points in the climate system? How can we avoid the worst ravages of climate and high-impact weather events—drought, wildfires, heatwaves, extreme precipitation events and floods, powerful hurricanes and more? What more can we do to tap the power of Nature, including the ocean, to solve mitigation and adaptation challenges simultaneously? How might we most effectively reduce emissions and stabilize/reduce the levels of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere? What factors limit Earth’s natural ability to sequester carbon? How might we address current inequities of costs and impacts to people across mitigation and adaptation efforts? What are the best ways to measure natural and anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions domestically, and independently estimate those of other countries?

Informing Decisions - Integrating climate science into operations and delivering climate knowledge to the world. Federal, state and local governments need information now on climate-related risks to safeguard infrastructure, inform rulemaking, manage natural resources, protect the health and well-being of all Americans, and create opportunities. The private sector, land-owners and ocean-users, and civil society need data, information and knowledge to plan and act. It is imperative therefore that the scientific information produced by the Federal government be readily accessible, understandable, and useable by all citizens. USGCRP should be the nexus for developing systems to provide climate knowledge to the world.

These challenges demand the best of our efforts. Which is why I am thrilled to work with you, the talented USGCRP team and agencies, and the Subcommittee on Global Change Research to meet the ambitious goals of the Biden Administration and deliver the climate knowledge that the Nation needs to boldly confront the challenges presented by climate change. We are united in our desire to have global change science serve society at a time of great needs and bold opportunities. Let’s seize the moment.

Sincerely,

The Honorable Jane Lubchenco, Ph.D.
Deputy Director for Climate and Environment
Office of Science and Technology Policy, Executive Office of the President