



POLICY STATEMENT ON CLIMATE CHANGE

Approved by the Board of Directors

November 26, 2018

Fly Fishers International is a global organization dedicated to the support, enhancement and protection of the recreational opportunities and enjoyment of fishing with the artificial fly. We do this through teaching all aspects of fly fishing and most importantly through our advocacy, demonstration and voice for conservation of our natural resources. Clearly, conservation of fishes and their habitats is fundamental to our opportunities and those of our children to fly fish.

This commitment to conservation of “all fish in all waters” requires that Fly Fishers International recognize and examine the impact of climate change on fishes, their freshwater and marine habitats and the wetlands and estuaries that support and nourish those habitats.

Fly Fishers International policy on Public Lands and Waters of the United States reinforces this commitment as it says, in part, these habitats “...collectively are much more valuable than simply as wetlands, watersheds and fish habitat. These are the habitats of a vast array of wildlife, plant and insect species, including those that may be threatened or endangered with extinction across our country. What must not be forgotten is that these very landscapes of minerals, waters and plants are essential to our own quality of life as human habitat. These are the landscapes that grow the plant communities that produce the clean air we breathe and process carbon dioxide into oxygen. The wetlands that clean and recharge our sources of fresh water are necessary to our lives. There is no question that these lands must be protected for our recreational interests and our own quality of life as humans.”¹

Climate Change and Its Impact

Our knowledge and understanding of climate change and its causes and effects on the natural world continue to evolve. This is the nature of scientific inquiry. However, there is now clear consensus within the scientific community that climate change is real, change is occurring at rates that exceed those of history and human-caused carbon emissions into the atmosphere are contributing to this accelerated rate of global climate change.²

Climate change has always been a part of the evolution of our natural world, but natural rates of change occurred in magnitudes of geologic time. It is now recognized conclusively that the earth’s climate is warming at rates that can be measured from one decade to another. It further is understood that this warming is being accelerated by human activities; particularly significant increases in carbon dioxide emissions and greenhouse gases.³

The National Aeronautics and Space Administration reports that impact of climate change and warming is seen in rising temperatures across the globe, the warming of the world's oceans, the shrinking of the polar ice sheets and glaciers, decreased snow cover, rising sea levels, increasing frequency of extreme weather events and ocean acidification, among others.⁴

These and other “...cascading effects...” of climate change are “...affecting our natural resources, fish and wildlife and outdoor opportunities...” according to a 2012 Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership report.⁵ It is beyond the scope of this policy statement to enumerate all those factors but some examples that should be of particular concern to fly fishers follow.

The effects of unchecked climate change on freshwater fishes, particularly cold water fish, will be dramatic. Changes in water temperature and reduced flows will cause the loss of trout and salmon habitat, reducing their distribution from historic locations and overall abundance where they will survive. Warm water fish will also be impacted as they are stressed by drought and drastic fluctuations in water levels. Their ranges have already changed as they move into waters previously inhabited solely by cold water species of fish. Other concerns include the advancement of exotic species and invasive plant species due to warmer water temperatures that are more conducive to establishment of invasive species.⁶

Marine fishes and their habitats are also at risk. Rising sea levels threaten coastal areas resulting in a loss of warm coastal waters and riparian and upland habitats. Warmer waters, decreased levels of dissolved oxygen and higher salinity will modify habitats and affect the distribution of saltwater species and their ability to reproduce. Marine fisheries will be adversely effected by inundation of coastal marshlands and loss of sea grass beds caused by rising sea levels and severe weather events.

FFI's Position

It is the policy of Fly Fishers International to advocate scientifically sound public policies, management practices and educational efforts to minimize and mitigate accelerated rates of climate changes caused by human activities. Most important to these efforts are the positive steps that must be taken to move our nation and encourage other nations toward a more carbon-free energy economy by minimizing the burning of fossil fuels. The current trend toward accelerated global warming is changing our natural world in a way that is not sustainable of human quality of life and enjoyment of our natural world.

Other specific actions we advocate include:

- We must inform and raise awareness among fly fishers and others who enjoy the outdoors of the impacts of climate change on fishes and their habitats so that they

may, as an informed citizenry, assume personal responsibility and support local, regional and global actions that mitigate rates of climate change.

- Support and encourage conservation projects that mitigate the effects of climate change on all habitats. All habitat conservation planning must include evaluation of project effects on climate change.
- Advocate for laws, public policy and practices that address climate change through our participation in strategic conservation partnerships and FFI conservation actions.
- Encourage Fly Fishers International Councils, Clubs, members and our fly fishing community to become informed and support local programs and public policies that address climate change issues.

Selected References

¹Fly Fishers International Policy on Public Lands and Waters of the United States. 2017. www.flyfishersinternational.org/Conservation/Policies

²Joint Science Academies Statement: Global Response to Climate Change. 2005. <http://nationalacademies.org/onpi/06072005.pdf>

³National Academy of Sciences and the Royal Society. 2008. Climate Change Evidence and Causes reports on Climate Change. <http://nas-sites.org/americasclimatechoices/>

⁴National Aeronautics and Space Administration. 2108. Global Climate Change: Vital Signs of the Planet. <https://climate.nasa.gov>

⁵Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership. 2012. Sportsmen and Climate Change: A Long Hard Look at Reality. <http://www.trcp.org/2012/08/14/sportsmen-and-climate-change-a-long-hard-look-at-reality/>

⁶Wildlife Management Institute. 2008. *Seasons End: Global Warming's Threat to Hunting and Fishing*. <https://wildlifemanagement.institute/outdoor-news-bulletin/june-2008/climate-change-report-hunters-and-anglers-now-available>