20 May 2025

The Honorable Doug Burgum
U.S. Department of the Interior
Office of the Secretary
1849 C Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Secretary Burgum:

On behalf of the undersigned organizations, we write to express our strong support for the U.S. Geological Survey's National and Regional Climate Adaptation Science Centers (CASCs) and urge that they be fully funded in the Fiscal Year (FY) 2026 budget, at the FY2025 funding level at a minimum, to continue their critical mission. As our nation confronts the growing impacts of climate change—from rising sea levels and extreme heat to wildfires, invasive species, and prolonged drought—the CASCs provide actionable science, tools, and training that land and resource managers need to safeguard communities, ecosystems, and economies across the nation.

The CASCs are unique federal-academic partnerships that conduct regionally tailored, decision-driven climate research and deliver adaptation solutions directly to federal, Tribal, state, and local stakeholders. These centers translate cutting-edge science into usable information that supports all regions of the country, including public lands and working landscapes that are essential to agriculture and forestry, as well as hunting and fishing. Their work not only protects our nation's natural resources, it also helps avoid costly damages and economic losses through proactive, science-informed decision-making.

CASCs support economic competitiveness by reducing risk for industries that rely on natural resources, including forestry, tourism, and fisheries. Their work with the Regional Invasive Species and Climate Change (RISCC) networks proactively addresses threats to forests and crops from emerging pests, helping avoid economic losses, protect jobs, and ensure the continued productivity of working lands. Nature-based solutions developed by CASC researchers not only preserve

ecosystem services but often cost less than traditional engineered approaches to climate adaptation.

CASCs are already delivering critical solutions. In the Southeast, one current project is working to improve how managers and practitioners' access and apply information to protect communities and economies at risk from extreme weather events. These include hurricane damage to ports and refineries, flooding of transportation corridors and power stations, and saltwater intrusion into coastal aquifers—issues that directly affect critical infrastructure and commerce.

In the South Central region, another CASC project is helping land managers and producers respond to increasing drought and water scarcity. By integrating satellite and field data, the project is developing a publicly accessible tool that tracks vegetation health and water-use efficiency. This innovation will allow farmers, ranchers, and conservationists to make better-informed decisions that conserve water and sustain agricultural productivity—especially in regions that support our national food supply chains.

CASCs also elevate the voices and knowledge of Tribal nations, integrating Indigenous science and leadership into adaptation planning. By partnering with regional universities and leveraging local expertise, CASCs provide scalable, community-based solutions grounded in both traditional and contemporary science. Their work is instrumental in helping agencies and communities fulfill their missions while preparing for climate-driven threats to public health, water supplies, biodiversity, and infrastructure.

CASCs offer an exceptional return on investment. University-hosted centers regularly triple the value of federal funding by securing additional research support and partnerships. This model enhances federal science capacity, expands workforce development opportunities, and ensures that the best available science is used to inform real-time decision-making.

In short, CASCs protect lives and livelihoods, reduce future costs, support climate-ready industry, and safeguard the places and systems Americans depend on every day. We respectfully urge the Department of the Interior to prioritize and fully fund the National and Regional Climate Adaptation Science Centers in the FY2026

budget at the FY2025 funding level at a minimum. Their work is foundational to building a resilient, competitive, and sustainable future.

Thank you for your leadership and commitment to science-informed stewardship of our nation's lands and resources. Please contact the American Geophysical Union's Vice President of Science Policy and Government Relations, Lexi Shultz with any questions (ashultz@agu.org).

Sincerely,

American Geophysical Union
American Fisheries Society
American Institute of Biological Sciences
Cartography and Geographic Information Society
Ecological Society of America
Entomological Society of America
Geological Society of America
National Flood Association
National Water Resources Association
Robin O'Malley LLC
Society of Environmental Toxicology and Chemistry of North America
University Consortium for Geographic Information Sciences

cc:
Scott Cameron, Acting Assistant Secretary for Water and Science, DOI
Sarah Ryker, Acting Director, USGS
Paul Wagner, Acting Associate Director for the Ecosystems Mission Area, USGS
David Applegate, Chief Scientist, USGS