# 2023 EARTH OBSERVATION ASSESSMENT REPORT: CLIMATE ANNEXES

## *Product of the* SUBCOMMITTEE ON U.S. EARTH OBSERVATION COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT

### December 2024

#### <span id="page-0-0"></span>**About the Subcommittee on the United States Group on Earth Observations**

The United States Group on Earth Observations (USGEO) is chartered as a Subcommittee of the NSTC Committee on Environment. The Subcommittee's purpose is to plan, assess, and coordinate Federal Earth observations, research, and activities; foster improved Earth system data management and interoperability; identify high-priority user needs for Earth observations data; and engage international stakeholders by formulating the United States' position for, and coordinating U.S. participation in, the intergovernmental Group on Earth Observations (GEO).

#### **About this Document**

In the area of climate, societal benefits accrue from Earth observation measurements that can inform both short- and long-term decisions made by policymakers, urban planners, disaster managers, research scientists, as well as watershed, natural resource, and land managers. Earth observation measurements of renewable resources and ecosystem condition also support evidence-based decision-making by commodity markets, communities, and all levels of government. These annexes to the Climate Report provide additional insights into the impact an Earth observation input has on parts of the societal benefit area (SBA) *value tree* (e.g., by SBA, SBA sub-area, and key product, service, and outcome [KPSO]). USGEO is making readily available, either through this report or through the online visualization services (https://usgeo.gov/eoa), those elements that are most valuable for agency and public analysis.

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#### <span id="page-3-0"></span>**Annex A: Climate Descriptions**

In Climate, societal benefits accrue from Earth observation measurements that can inform both short- and long-term decisions made by farmers, ranchers, foresters, research scientists, as well as watershed, natural resource, and land managers. Land management decisions are complicated by dynamic and ongoing sources of disturbance, such as diseases, pests, climate extremes, as well as climate change and the conversion of natural land to other uses. Earth observation measurements of renewable resources and ecosystem condition also support evidence-based decision-making within commodity markets, communities, and all levels of government. Accurate and timely (e.g., low latency) information derived from Earth-observing systems can help enhance food supplies, advance the productivity of renewable resources, improve ecosystem condition, and maximize our resilience to disasters and disturbance events. Measurements in this societal benefit area (SBA) improve the ability of farmers and foresters to meet the needs for human food, animal feed, fiber, biofuels, and forest products; support production decisions; and advance forecasting and risk analysis. Measurements in this SBA lead to reduced damages and inform risk from human and natural sources of disturbance including climate change, such as ecosystem degradation, wildfire, drought, flood, and storm events, as well as pests and invasive species. Research and improved data in this SBA can contribute to early warning systems for crop yield shortfalls and pest outbreaks; quantify the potential impact of climate change on the supply of renewable Agricultural & Forestry products; improve data to support the management of and response to disturbance and disaster events; and limit ecosystem degradation associated with agricultural, forestry, and grazing practices.

Within the Climate SBA, four sub-areas were identified representing the major thematic components, each with between three and seven key objectives. To assess the relative contribution of each Earth observation input to the provision of societal benefit, SBA teams consisting of federal subject matter experts assigned *weights* to each of the sub-areas and key objectives based on input from subject matter experts within the interagency. The total weight of all sub-areas under an SBA sum to 100% as do the total weights of every key objective under a particular sub-area, and these weights are shown in brackets in the descriptions below.

#### <span id="page-3-1"></span>**The Earth's Climate System and the Changes Occurring in It [35%]**

Improving our understanding of the climate system requires fundamental research activities that probe critical processes, interactions with other aspects of the Earth system, and any significant forcings and feedbacks taking place due to natural and anthropogenic influences.

Observations at the climate system level provide us data to improve modeling of the changes occurring primarily due to human activities. Continuity of measurements is critical for addressing the KOs in this area and ensuring the fundamental understanding underpinning international treaties remains valid in a changing climate.

#### <span id="page-3-2"></span>*The Atmosphere: Understand and model atmospheric circulation variability and change, and the role of the atmosphere in climate change [15%]*

The atmosphere plays a unique role in the climate system due to its volatility, rapid transport of heat, moisture, aerosols, and chemical species, and its influence on Earth's radiation balance through cloud and water vapor feedbacks. Recent advances in EO systems have helped improve our understanding of these processes and interactions, but challenges remain in accurately representing atmospheric dynamics and addressing uncertainties in climate sensitivity. This KO focuses on improved understanding of the dynamic properties and physical processes within the Earth's atmosphere. Additionally, it seeks to understand the feedback mechanisms between the atmosphere and the climate system, including water vapor and cloud feedbacks that influence climate sensitivity.

EO systems play a critical role in meeting this KO by providing comprehensive and continuous data on various aspects of the atmosphere. EO systems deliver essential measurements of temperature, water vapor, wind, pressure, precipitation, and atmospheric constituents. This will require data, gathered from a combination of ground-based, airborne, and satellite instruments, as well as reanalysis models to advance our understanding of the atmosphere and its role in climate change. High-resolution observations in space and time are necessary to capture localized and episodic phenomena like precipitation. While the traditional radiosonde network has provided valuable data, satellite observations have become indispensable for global coverage and understanding of essential climate variables (ECVs). Continuous efforts must be made to maintain and enhance global atmospheric observing systems, improve the accuracy of atmospheric observations, ensure adequate observational coverage in underserved areas, and advance the modeling of the small but critical and compounding changes that occur over decades.

This KO is critical to Federal agencies' missions as it addresses the urgent need to enhance our understanding of the Earth's atmosphere, which plays an important foundational role in monitoring, modeling, and predicting changes occurring in the climate system. Achieving this objective through prudent investments in the most salient EO systems leads to more accurate climate models, forecasts of extreme weather events, and a deeper understanding of the economic and environmental impacts of long-term climate change. Furthermore, knowledge of atmospheric circulation variability and change can contribute to our understanding of how human-induced changes, such as increasing greenhouse gas emissions and aerosol distributions, affect the atmosphere and climate system. Ultimately this allows policymakers to make improved decisions about Federal agency investments to facilitate better climate change mitigation, adaptation, and disaster preparedness.

#### <span id="page-4-0"></span>*The Ocean: Understand and model ocean variability and change, including the ocean's physical, biogeochemical, and dynamical conditions, and the role of oceans in climate change [30%]*

Ocean waters cover 70% of the Earth's surface, and the ocean's influence extends to seasonal, interannual, and decadal variability of the climate system. The ocean has greater capacity than the atmosphere and land to store heat and carbon. It holds most of the water in the global hydrological cycle, providing through evaporation the vital water that falls over land as rain and snow. Prolonged drought is influenced by persistent patterns of ocean surface temperature and consequent influences on evaporation and atmospheric circulation patterns. Coupled atmosphere-ocean regimes such as ENSO change seasonal weather and storm patterns around the world. The transport of heat from the tropics toward the poles is a major factor in determining the surface temperature of many nations; transport along and under ice shelves may determine how rapidly they separate from land and buttress glaciers, and, in turn, affect sea level, whose rise is one of the more significant societal concerns about climate change. Moreover, due to its storage and transport of heat, the ocean is a possible origin of rapid climate change, through alteration of its deep circulation.

EO systems are essential in providing accurate and comprehensive data on various aspects of the ocean. Observations of ocean color, sea surface temperature, and air-sea exchanges of heat, moisture, and momentum are necessary for understanding oceanic and atmospheric interactions. Autonomous CO2 sampling instruments on ships and moored buoys, as well as satellite-based measurements, are essential for monitoring biogeochemical changes and the ocean's role in carbon sequestration. Paleo-oceanographic reconstructions from sediment cores offer valuable long-term records of ocean parameters to serve as baselines against current changes. Sea level measurements, sea ice observations, and data on the regional sources and sinks of carbon are also crucial for understanding the global carbon cycle and its role in climate change. Furthermore, international partnerships and ongoing ocean carbon inventories are vital to support the implementation of effective climate policies, climate mitigation efforts such as marine carbon dioxide removal, and forecasts.

This KO is an essential component of Federal agencies' missions to assist vulnerable communities and manage or protect marine resources and ecosystems in response to the impacts of climate change. Understanding ocean variability and change provides significant societal benefits, such as more accurate climate predictions, better management of fisheries, and informed decision-making for coastal communities facing sea-level rise. Furthermore, studying the ocean's biogeochemical cycle fills gaps in our understanding of the overall climate sensitivity of the Earth to greenhouse gas emissions, while also

facilitating improved projections for use in the development of adaptation strategies for affected marine ecosystems and the communities that depend on them.

#### <span id="page-5-0"></span>*The Cryosphere: Understand and model the Earth's cryospheric systems, including the sensitivity, feedbacks, and dominant processes controlling system variability, evolution and change, and the role of cryospheric systems in climate change [20%]*

This KO is centered on understanding and modeling the Earth's cryospheric systems, which include frozen components such as sea ice, glaciers, ice sheets, and permafrost. The focus is on the sensitivity, feedbacks, and dominant processes controlling system variability, evolution, and change, as well as the role of cryospheric systems in climate change. In addition, many communities depend on the water resources or other ecosystem services associated with the cryosphere, underscoring the societal benefits that come with improved monitoring and prediction capabilities. Cryospheric systems are experiencing notable alterations due to climate change, such as thinning arctic sea ice, loss of Greenland ice sheet mass, destabilization of West Antarctic ice shelves, shrinking mountain glaciers, and deepening permafrost thaw layers. However, the processes controlling these changes remain poorly understood and represented in models.

Fortunately, technologies are rapidly evolving to enable additional observations in coastal regions, biogeochemical cycle variables, and primary productivity. Observations of sea ice extent, concentration, and thickness are essential for assessing climate change indicators, global albedo processes, and impacts on polar ecosystems. Land ice system models are just beginning to be coupled into climate models, and challenges include adequately coupling the systems, initializing the ice conditions, and testing the models. Paleoclimate perspectives, such as paleo-sea reconstructions from sediment cores, serve as baselines for understanding modern changes in cryospheric systems. Observations of permafrost warming and effects on carbon release are also critical for enhancing our understanding of the processes involved and improving the representation of these processes in climate models.

Understanding the dynamics of cryospheric systems is essential for predicting sea level rise, ocean freshening, and alterations in global albedo, which can have profound impacts on coastal communities and ecosystems. Moreover, changes in the cryosphere can influence energy resources, transportation accessibility, and the release of stored ancient carbon, affecting global carbon balance and navigation in affected regions. Developing a better understanding of these systems will inform policy decisions and adaptation strategies to mitigate the impacts of the changing environment, preserve vulnerable ecosystems, manage resources in polar regions, and contribute to navigation and infrastructure planning in permafrostaffected areas.

#### <span id="page-5-1"></span>*The Land Surface: Understand and model land surface variability and change with respect to the primary influences on the climate system and climate change [5%]*

The land surface is where we live, and it has unique characteristics in how it reflects heat, light, and other radiation. Topography greatly influences local to regional climates in both the simple effects of elevation such as adiabatic cooling, and more complex effects such as rain shadowing and wind abatement. Albedo and other surface characteristics directly influence climate, and human induced changes in these—such as urban heat islands, regional agricultural practices, and reforestation effects—are well known examples.

Land surface products may be the most mature and widely used of our global remote sensing systems. Remote sensing products in particular are extremely useful because they provide a global (or very large regional) view of critical variables, such as temperature and differentials in it, over brief timescales. Although they are widely ground-truthed, remote sensing products ultimately provide coverage in areas where ground survey may be impossible or lacking. This allows comprehensive models that can calculate global climate variable effects with minimum possible bias.

This KO is essential to the missions of almost all Federal agencies, as they manage resources on land or manage resources elsewhere but have large footprints on land, all of which will have to account for the effects of climate and how they influence it. Topography, terrestrial ecosystems, and land use all can greatly influence local to regional climates in both the simple effects of elevation such as adiabatic cooling, and more complex effects such as urban heat islands.

#### <span id="page-6-0"></span>*Climate Sensitivity and Climate Feedbacks: Understand and model feedbacks across the Earth's climate system, including changes in cloud cover, atmospheric water vapor, ocean circulation, and Arctic amplification (accelerated warming in the Arctic), and improve understanding of climate system sensitivity to external forcings including from human and natural sources [25%]*

Climate sensitivity refers to the equilibrium response of the Earth's temperature to changes in radiative forcing, while climate feedbacks are processes that either amplify or dampen this response. This KO aims to improve the comprehension and modeling of the climate system's sensitivity to external forcings, originating from both human and natural sources, and the feedbacks across the Earth's climate system. These models include assessment of current teleconnections (ENSO, Arctic Oscillation [AO], North Atlantic Oscillation [NAO], Indian Ocean Dipole [IOD], Pacific Decadal Oscillation [PDO], Atlantic Multidecadal Oscillation [AMO]) for correlation with future atmospheric and drought conditions on subseasonal to seasonal time scales, the base state, variability, and climate change of small-scale modes of circulation, and all relevant Earth system models such as those participating in Coupled Model Intercomparison Project (CMIP). Understanding all the variability, feedback mechanisms, and climate sensitivities is challenging, as they involve complex interactions between various Earth system components, which includes changes in cloud cover, atmospheric water vapor, ocean circulation, and Arctic amplification (accelerated warming in the Arctic).

These feedbacks and modes of variability can exhibit significant regional diversity; however, the current climate models demonstrate much less robustness in accurately representing regional signals than capturing broad patterns. As decision-makers and the public seek reliable information to determine strategies to address human-caused warming of the planet and reduce the severity of related impacts, addressing the knowledge gaps in climate sensitivity and feedbacks becomes increasingly urgent.

Addressing this KO can contribute to the credibility and utility of Federal agencies' climate services, supporting more informed decisions on water and energy policies, community vulnerability assessments, and adaptation and mitigation strategies (e.g., reducing greenhouse gas emissions).

#### <span id="page-6-1"></span>*Past Climate: Improve understanding and quantification of past climate states and extremes, including abrupt changes in climate [5%]*

This KO focuses on the use of paleoclimate records, such as corals, ice cores, pollen core studies, and tree rings. These records help to uncover insights about historical climate states; abrupt changes; the role of the carbon cycle, the temperature, and hydrological responses to climate forcings; the El Niño-Southern Oscillation (ENSO) and its sensitivity to forcing variations; and hydroclimate regimes of multi-decadal length. Furthermore, understanding the historical range of conditions provides valuable context to establish a baseline for estimating possible extremes, reversals, and threshold behavior under human-caused warming of the planet.

Achieving this KO relies on the integration of various types of EO data. For example, lake ice melt dates serve as effective signals for monitoring regional climate warming trends, and pollen core studies help uncover inland historic climate trends. Assimilation of the more recent historical data into high-resolution climate simulations also provides valuable information about changes in circulation and the frequency of large storms during recent centuries.

The quantification of uncertainty of sensitivities to climate forcings is essential for developing an enhanced and fundamental understanding of the temperature and hydrological responses that are associated with given amounts of human-caused greenhouse gases and aerosols. A better understanding of past climate states helps us anticipate and prepare for future climate change, ensuring more effective adaptation and mitigation strategies. For example, crucial information on hydroclimate regimes can inform regional water management practices and assist decision-makers to assess the potential risks associated with climate change.

#### <span id="page-7-0"></span>**Human and Natural Influences on the Climate System [5%]**

To slow, stop, or reverse climate change, directly addressing its drivers will be necessary. The primary drivers of recent warming in the climate system are human emissions of well-mixed and long-lived greenhouse gases such as CO2, nitrous oxide (N2O), chlorofluorocarbons, and methane (CH4). The sources of these greenhouse gases include fossil fuel combustion (for industrial processes, power generation, and transportation), agriculture and deforestation, and natural processes that occur in response to these changes and associated planetary warming. Currently, about half of the CO2 emitted by fossil fuel combustion is removed from the atmosphere by the ocean and terrestrial systems, but there is uncertainty about the continuing strength of these carbon sinks in the future. This results in a first-order uncertainty in climate prediction (i.e., on par with cloud and water vapor feedbacks). In addition, anthropogenic emissions of aerosols can have a cooling effect on the climate by reducing the flux of solar radiation through the atmosphere. These emissions are more localized and have a short lifetime in the atmosphere. This complicates our understanding of how climate is responding to increases in radiative forcing, since the long-term warming effects of CO2 have been partially and temporarily masked by the cooling effects of the shorter-lived species. Globally, the concentrations of these aerosols are decreasing, which could enhance the warming effect of greenhouse gas emissions.

Understanding the sources, sinks, and impacts of these and other human or natural climate forcers such as aerosols is critical for the efforts to slow or reverse human-caused climate change. This information allows for better design of less impactful technologies, more effective emission management, and more effective adaptation and mitigation policies.

#### <span id="page-7-1"></span>*Understand climate system forcings and improve their estimation [45%]*

This KO concerns fundamental research to understand the sensitivity of the climate system to natural or human perturbations (or forcings). Changes to the climate system are largely based on changes in atmospheric concentrations of greenhouse gases, which warm the climate, and aerosols, which primarily cool the climate. Greenhouse gas and aerosol concentrations in the atmosphere are derived from natural and anthropogenic sources. The sensitivity of the climate system will depend on several factors, such as the radiative properties of the respective molecules or particles, their overall concentration, the average duration of a forcing constituent once in the atmosphere (also known as the atmospheric lifetime), and the level of dispersion throughout the atmosphere. All these factors require accurate measurements and observations for reliable estimations that can be used to predict climate system responses. These processes are also included in climate models, as these models simulate the full behavior of the climate system.

EO systems will be critical to advancing this KO, particularly with respect to estimation of the level and strength of climate system forcings. For example, greenhouse gas concentrations are observed and monitored at many locations above Earth's surface using towers, aircraft, and ships. There are also firstgeneration exploratory efforts to capture greenhouse gas distributions using satellite remote sensing. Fluxes between atmosphere and ocean or land are measured as well. Observations of greenhouse gases need to be continued and expanded to better understand the processes of CO2 removal from the atmosphere. This will allow for better representation of (potentially strong) positive feedbacks between the terrestrial and oceanic carbon cycles and climate in Earth system models. Short-lived greenhouse gases include ozone and methane, which has a complex mix of natural and anthropogenic sources. But CO2 emissions are of primary concern for climate because of their very long atmospheric lifetime. Aerosols primarily cool climate, with some absorption by dark carbonaceous particles and dust contributing to warming. Aerosols also brighten clouds and extend their lifetimes, which adds to the clouds' cooling effects. Aerosols come from natural sources (desert dust, sea-sprays, volcanic eruptions and degassing, and terrestrial emissions), as well as

from biomass burning and fossil fuel combustion. Aerosols are removed from the atmosphere by precipitation scavenging, dry deposition, and gravitational settling, and their lifetimes are short (e.g., days to weeks in the troposphere). Because of their diverse sources and short lifetimes, the distributions and climate impacts of aerosols vary widely by time and region. The sources, sinks, concentrations, and chemical processes involving these short- and long-lived atmospheric species need to be measured and included as critical drivers in models that simulate climate, both for the relatively short period during which the model output can be compared against instrumental data, and for the past millennium, during which forcings such as volcanic and solar activity can be compared against paleoclimate reconstructions that are resolved annually and sub-annually.

This KO is an important component of Federal agencies' missions to assist the Nation in meeting its commitments on anthropogenic climate change and to adapt to a warming planet. Understanding and estimating climate system forcings provides significant societal benefits by allowing for more accurate estimation of the sensitivity of the climate system to these forcings and better prediction of climate system responses that will affect society.

#### <span id="page-8-0"></span>*Assess, attribute, and project changes to sources and sinks of natural and anthropogenic atmospheric radiative forcing agents and pollution constituents [10%]*

Both anthropogenic agents originating from human activities and natural agents stemming from processes like volcanic eruptions or solar activity have significant influence on the climate system. These agents and constituents, such as greenhouse gases and aerosols, can alter the Earth's energy balance by absorbing, emitting, or reflecting radiation. Understanding the impact of the sources, sinks, concentrations, and chemical processes of these agents and their impacts on the climate system is a complex and challenging task due to the diverse nature of these agents and constituents, their varying spatial and temporal scales, the complex interplay between different climate drivers, and the intricate interactions between them and the Earth's climate system.

There are a variety of ways to examine how various drivers, including natural and anthropogenic greenhouse gases and short-lived climate forcers, contribute to climate change. Climate models have been used to study the impact of various forcing factors (such as CO2). Much more useful than understanding the effects of a given species is to simulate and understand the effects of a given source, where each source typically emits a complex mixture of species—but this is difficult to validate. Uncertainty in the model processes also limits the usefulness of models for attributing impacts to sources. Robust detection and attribution research makes use of statistical methods involving both models and observations to connect specific impacts to sources. This can be challenging particularly for effects that are isolated in space or time, such as for extreme events or for regional climate signals.

The main limiting factor is usually sufficient spatial and temporal availability of measurements of both drivers and impacts. A second critical limit is the ability to discriminate the chemical composition of aerosols because different compositions can impose different impacts. For example, attribution of climate change to short-lived species is uncertain in part because of limited observations of the species, but also because they vary both spatially and temporally. Extensive measurements are essential to advance this research and make it useful to society. Various metrics intermediate between cause and effect are often used to provide estimates of the climate impact of individual factors, with applications both in science and policy. Radiative forcing (RF) is one of the most widely used metrics, and most other metrics are based on RF. RF is the net change in the energy balance of the Earth system due to some imposed perturbation. It is usually expressed in watts per square meter averaged over a particular period of time and quantifies the energy imbalance that occurs when the imposed change takes place. Though usually difficult to observe, estimates of RF provide a simple quantitative basis for comparing some aspects of the potential climate response to different imposed agents, especially global mean temperature, and, hence, is widely used in the scientific community. Forcing is often presented as the value due to changes between two particular times, such as pre-industrial to present-day.

Improved understanding of radiative forcing (RF) agents reduces uncertainties in climate modeling. The enhanced capability to forecast climate variability and change leads to more targeted and effective policies for emission reduction and better planning and preparedness for extreme weather events.

#### <span id="page-9-0"></span>*Monitor atmospheric greenhouse gas concentrations [15%]*

This KO aims to systematically detect and measure the levels of greenhouse gases, such as carbon dioxide (CO2), methane (CH4), nitrous oxide (N2O), chlorofluorocarbons, and short-lived species like carbonaceous aerosols, sulfate and ozone in the Earth's atmosphere. Greenhouse gases trap heat from the Sun in the atmosphere, which leads to global warming and other harmful effects.

This task presents unique challenges, as greenhouse gases are emitted and transported around the world and vary across regions and time. The needs for measurements can be diverse at different altitudes with various interactions among atmospheric components. The complexity of the Earth's atmosphere, coupled with the need for high-quality, long-term datasets to discern trends, further emphasizes the importance of advanced observation techniques. Except for the anthropogenic sources of greenhouse gases, it is also vital to account for natural variability, such as seasonal fluctuations in vegetation and oceanic processes that affect the carbon cycle. Recent advances in EO technologies, such as the launch of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration's (NASA) Orbiting Carbon Observatory-3 (OCO-3) and Europe's Sentinel-5P satellite, have improved our ability to monitor greenhouse gas concentrations and better understand their sources and sinks. Additionally, advances in data assimilation techniques have allowed for more accurate and reliable estimates of greenhouse gas fluxes between the atmosphere and land and ocean surfaces.

The monitoring of these concentrations is essential for understanding, modeling, and forecasting climate variability and change, providing foundational information for policymakers, businesses, and individuals to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and mitigate climate change. By monitoring greenhouse gas concentrations, governments can also track the effectiveness of climate policies, identify emission hotspots, and assess the impact of climate change on natural resources, ecosystems, and human health.

#### <span id="page-9-1"></span>*Effectively validate greenhouse gas emissions inventories through enhanced cooperation with organizations such as the Global Climate Observing System and the Committee on Earth Observing Satellites [5%]*

Greenhouse gas emissions inventories account for GHG emissions from various activities, such as burning fossil fuels and deforestation, which contribute to climate change. By validating greenhouse gas emissions inventories, we can ensure that the information collected is accurate, reliable, and globally comparable. This is achieved by strengthening collaboration with key organizations, such as the Global Climate Observing System (GCOS), which is an international program that ensures the provision of continuous, reliable, and high-quality climate observations—and the Committee on Earth Observing Satellites (CEOS), which coordinates civil space-borne observations of Earth to maximize societal benefit and ensure efficient use of resources.

The collaboration involves sharing of best practices, harmonizing data from diverse sources, establishment of robust validation processes, and overcoming limitations in current monitoring capabilities. This fosters more consensus among diverse organizations, recognizing the importance of collaborative efforts to tackle climate change effectively.

#### <span id="page-9-2"></span>*Monitor or predict the effects of potential climate intervention strategies [25%]*

Monitoring and predicting the effects of climate intervention strategies, including solar radiation modification (SRM) and other geoengineering strategies, is of societal interest because of their potential unintended consequences and unknown risks. Therefore, research in this area is essential to ensure that the benefits of any interventions outweigh the risks and potential negative impacts on the environment and society.

The success of this KO relies heavily on EO systems to provide high-quality data on various environmental parameters, including atmospheric and surface radiation measurements, cloud and aerosol properties, and ocean heat content, to understand the changes in the Earth's climate system. The requirements for EO data need to be more accurate, reliable, and validated to ensure that the SRM models are robust.

Monitoring and predicting the effects of any past and potential climate intervention strategies may be important to some Federal agencies whose missions involve developing effective policy responses to mitigate the impacts of climate change. Meeting this KO allows policymakers to allocate resources more efficiently and equitably across different social groups and regions. By investing in measures that are likely to have the most significant positive impact while minimizing potential risks, societies can maximize the benefits of climate action. Other societal benefits include supporting the promotion of social justice, reducing disparities, and ensuring that vulnerable populations are not disproportionately affected by climate change or intervention strategies.

#### <span id="page-10-0"></span>**Climate Change Effects on Human and Environmental Systems [35%]**

Understanding climate change effects on human and environmental systems provides essential information for adaptation and mitigation decisions across the country. Climate changes—including changes in temperature, precipitation, sea level, and extreme weather events—impact natural and human systems, human health, infrastructure, ecosystems, and economies. Modeling and predicting these impacts are challenging due to the complex and interconnected nature of these systems, which requires a multidisciplinary approach and the integration of different types of data.

Observed changes in climate extremes reflect the influence of anthropogenic climate change that can lead to increases in natural climate variability. There is evidence from observations gathered since 1950 of change in some extremes that include extended heat waves and droughts, more severe flooding, and stronger storms. Confidence in observed changes in extremes depends on the quality and quantity of data and the availability of studies analyzing these data, which vary across regions and for different extremes. Assigning "low confidence" in observed changes in a specific extreme on regional or global scales neither implies nor excludes the possibility of changes in this extreme. Extreme events are rare, which means there are limited data available to make assessments regarding changes in their frequency or intensity. The rarer the event, the more difficult it is to identify long-term changes. Global-scale trends in a specific extreme may be either more reliable (e.g., for temperature extremes) or less reliable (e.g., for droughts) than some regional-scale trends, depending on the geographical uniformity of the trends in the specific extreme.

Observations are needed to build capacity to better identify and deliver climate information that supports informed adaptation and mitigation policy through a sustained assessment process, including national and international science assessments, problem-focused assessments, and needs assessments. The value of assessment is in its unique ability to bridge the research and the services components of a societally relevant science enterprise. Assessment implies a process of engagement and research to produce a suite of products that are timely, relevant, and credible. The assessment process includes identification and refinement of needs within key sectors through engagement with local and regional stakeholders. During this engagement, the regional context and the knowledge of regions and locations produces new insight and understanding of vulnerabilities that inform science priorities and communications. The shared learning between experts and practitioners engaged in the assessment process helps create a community of practice that drives our science and our services in complementary directions that are relevant to stakeholders.

Problem-focused climate science assessments are often time-sensitive. They address specific climatesensitive issues; are done in response to significant changes in environmental conditions; and support policy, planning, and decision-making at local to regional levels. Problem-focused climate science assessments may be applied at local scales, and often use national and international climate science assessments as a starting point, but such assessments generally require additional analyses, reprocessing, interpretation, and information to focus more tightly on a specific problem or place. Examples include: (1) the rapid evaluation of recent local changes and trends in extreme climate events, especially their impacts; (2) the analysis of whether these changes and trends portend future impacts, especially as related to specific aspects of an area's infrastructure, ecosystems, or economics; and (3) the review of whether current adaptation or mitigation efforts are meeting intended goals. This kind of assessment can lead to the development of easy-to-use decision support tools and the timely flow of data and information to support such tools.

Federal agencies play a crucial role in developing policies and programs on adaptation and mitigation based on impact assessments. Appropriate assessment also requires consensus and efforts among diverse organizations to advance observation systems and modeling to support more effective policies and programs across the Nation.

#### <span id="page-11-0"></span>*Understand, assess, predict, and project the impacts of climate change, including extreme events, on water resources [25%]*

Effects of climate change on water resources involve climate change influences on water quality and quantity, as well as how extreme weather events like droughts, floods, and storms affect water availability and usage. This objective recognizes that water is a vital resource that has tremendous implications for human health, agriculture, energy production, and industrial processes. The challenges associated with this KO include the complexity of water systems and the need to accurately model how water resources will change over time including water use, availability, and quality—and how future land use and socioeconomic and climate change impact water resources.

EO systems, including satellites, airborne sensors, and ground-based measurements, provide information on water cycle dynamics, precipitation patterns, soil moisture, surface water, snow and ice cover, and groundwater storage. Data on vegetation, land use, and land cover also provide information on water use, evapotranspiration, and water availability information that require integrated land-water modeling to account for complex interactions driven by natural and anthropogenic processes.

Understanding, monitoring, assessing, predicting, and projecting the impacts of climate change on water resources provides critical information for making informed decisions about water resource management. Federal and local agencies rely on this knowledge to develop strategies to mitigate drought impacts and adapt to more frequent extreme events in the future and to ensure water security and quality for communities and industries. These strategies are essential to ensure and enhance food security, public health, and public safety for the future.

#### <span id="page-11-1"></span>*Understand, assess, predict, and project the impacts of climate change, including extreme events, on the built environment, including urban systems, energy systems, and transportation systems [10%]*

Climatic changes and extreme events such as extreme heat, severe storms, wildland fires, flooding, drought, and sea level rise pose threats to a wide variety of sectors, including the built environment (e.g., roads and buildings), water resources, agriculture, forests, wildlife habitat, outdoor recreation, and human health. In particular, the built environment is at risk, including roads and buildings, which can suffer long-term damage from climate change—and energy systems, which are critical to climate change adaptation yet vulnerable to extreme events.

The requirements for data and information vary from sector to sector, and engagement with individual sectors is needed to understand what information is needed and how much uncertainty is tolerable. At the same time, there are some commonalities in requirements across sectors, and identifying how best to leverage these will be important to effectively meet growing needs. Projections of future water, wind, and solar resource availability; storm frequency; temperature exceedance frequency and severity; and sea level change rate are among the most important information for various sectors. For example, remote sensing data can be used to monitor land use changes, vegetation cover, and soil moisture, which can help predict the occurrence of droughts and floods. Satellite data can also be used to monitor sea level rise, which is critical for understanding the potential impacts on coastal infrastructure. EO data can also be used to identify areas where infrastructure investments, such as building seawalls or updating stormwater management systems, may be necessary to reduce the risks associated with climate change.

Knowledge about the historical and potential impacts of climate change on various sectors will support Federal agencies and communities to develop more effective policies and programs to reduce disruptions in the supply chain, minimize losses to businesses, and improve the resilience of communities. Ultimately, adaptation and mitigation activities will help to reduce the impact of natural disasters on communities, protect infrastructure, reduce energy consumption, and improve public health in the long run.

#### <span id="page-12-0"></span>*Understand, assess, predict, and project the impacts of climate change, including extreme events, on human-driven changes to land cover and land use [5%]*

Climatic changes and extreme events such as extreme heat, severe storms, wildland fires, flooding, and drought may bring significant impact on land cover changes and land use. This KO has the aim of understanding and predicting the direct and indirect consequences of climate change on the physical characteristics of the Earth's surface, including vegetation, water, and human-made structures, as well as people's interaction with and utilization of these natural resources.

The EO system, including powerful computational models, provides vital data on land surface characteristics, such as temperature, water, and surface imaging, that helps to monitor and analyze the changes in land cover and land use over time, as well as the effects of those changes on the land and humandriven changes to the land and the built environment. For example, forest fragmentation and growth (or declines in growth) can be measured using ranging techniques such as LiDAR (e.g., ICESat-2 and GEDI) and Synthetic Aperture Radar (e.g., Sentinel-1 and the upcoming NISAR mission). Urban green cover, fire extent, wetland extent, and the agricultural landscape and its mix with urban activities are measured by a large variety of instruments at various wavelengths. The ECOSTRESS instrument on the International Space Station (ISS) can measure evapotranspiration, the process by which water is transferred from the land to the atmosphere through evaporation from soil and transpiration from plants. Changes in evapotranspiration can indicate shifts in water availability and usage, which are influenced by climate change. Hurricanes and their effects can be observed over time with numerous weather satellites and ground systems, and models such as FPHLM and HAZUS can incorporate the data and predict losses. In three dimensions, temperature and water effects as well as numerous biogeochemical fluxes are paramount and are remotely sensed and modeled as well.

#### <span id="page-12-1"></span>*Understand, assess, predict, and project the impacts of climate change, including extreme events, on terrestrial ecosystems and agroforestry systems [5%]*

Climatic changes and extreme events such as extreme heat, severe storms, wildland fires, flooding, and drought can significantly impact terrestrial ecosystems and agroforestry systems. The scope of this objective encompasses various ecological and agricultural systems, including forests, grasslands, deserts, crop fields, and livestock habitats. Accomplishing this objective poses unique challenges due to the complexity of the interactions between different components of the Earth system.

A growing body of observation indicates that natural systems are changing and are impacted due to a warming planet and associated climate extremes. Ecosystem changes include shifts in species and animal and insect populations due to changing temperatures and precipitation. Cryospheric changes that affect associated ecosystems are strongly evident, with diminished mountain glaciers, loss of ice sheet mass from Greenland and Antarctica, and thaw of permafrost. With climate warming, hot extremes will become more common, and the atmosphere will be more conducive to more extreme precipitation events. As a result, ecosystems and agricultural systems that are sensitive to these extremes will be more likely to be negatively impacted. Similarly, species and agricultural systems that are better adapted to extended periods of heat will have an advantage.

EO systems provide observations of various environmental parameters such as temperature, precipitation, water vapor, soil moisture, and vegetation cover, which is vital for monitoring and analyzing changes in terrestrial ecosystems and agroforestry systems. Accurate and high-resolution data are needed to develop decision support tools that can be used by policymakers, farmers, etc., to ensure the health and sustainability of ecosystems, the services they provide, and the Nation's food supply.

#### <span id="page-13-0"></span>*Understand, assess, predict, and project the impacts of climate change, including extreme events, on coastal and marine resources and ecosystems [35%]*

Climatic changes and extreme events such as extreme heat, severe storms, sea level rise, and hurricanes may bring significant impact to coastal and marine resources and ecosystems. Climate change is leading to warmer and more acidic ocean conditions, which impact ocean ecosystems (e.g., coral reef bleaching). Climate changes and extremes that have particularly profound, sometimes catastrophic impacts on vulnerable regions include storms such as hurricanes and tornadoes, droughts and floods, sea level rise and coastal storm surge, and extended high temperatures.

The success of this KO relies heavily on EO systems. EO data can help track the impacts of climate change on coastal and marine ecosystems by measuring various parameters such as sea surface temperature, ocean color, ocean acidity, sea level, coastal erosion, and changes in marine habitats. EO data also allow for identifying and assessing areas that are particularly vulnerable to climate impacts, such as coastal communities at risk of sea level rise or coral reefs threatened by ocean warming and acidification. By combining observational data with climate models, scientists can simulate how factors like sea level rise, ocean temperature, and extreme weather events will affect the coastal and marine ecosystems over time.

This KO is essential for Federal agency missions in coastal zone management and marine spatial planning. Coastal and marine ecosystems support millions of people worldwide through fisheries, tourism, and other economic activities. By assessing the impacts of climate change on these vulnerable ecosystems, societies can develop sustainable management practices and alternative livelihood options to safeguard the wellbeing of coastal communities dependent on these resources. Predictions and projections also help policymakers and stakeholders make informed decisions about mitigation measures and adaptation strategies to protect infrastructure, homes, and livelihoods of the coastal communities and reduce the risk of damage and loss from extreme events.

#### <span id="page-13-1"></span>*Understand, assess, predict, and project the impacts of climate change, including extreme events, on the air quality and human health [10%]*

It is critical to have accessible EO for health surveillance, monitoring, and forecasting across disciplines. EO have been used for monitoring vector borne diseases across the world, understanding heat impacts, providing heat forecasts, and monitoring air quality.

EO data are often not in an accessible format for health researchers, nor are they included in the initial framing of a given tool or data collection. Data should be provided in a format and spatial-temporal scale often used in the health sector to ensure that socioeconomic and health surveillance data can be incorporated. EO data should also be downscaled to be used in local regions, which will be of most use to public health officials and environmental justice communities. There is also a need for new sensor technology to improve EO (high resolution, high accuracy, low-cost sensors); novel data collection processing and sharing pathways via the use of novel computing technologies; artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning algorithms; unique data sharing platforms/interfaces that promote use of EO data by diverse stakeholder groups (e.g., commercial entities, state and local governments); and decision support tools that take into consideration Earth monitoring data with the end goal of empowering communities and individuals. This is a step beyond a data dashboard and includes technology like digital twins and other interactive interfaces that utilize modeling, simulation, and AI.

Climate justice on local, national, and global levels addresses historic injustices and systemic discrimination that created disproportionate climate change impacts on historically underserved populations. These populations include Black, Indigenous, and people of color, sexual and gender minorities, geographically isolated groups, low-wealth communities, rural communities, citizenship status, those with disabilities, children, those who are elderly, and more. These populations often do not have equitable access to, for example, health care services, disaster infrastructure, and green spaces. To address climate injustice, local communities need to be empowered to determine how support is provided and used and tools need to be co-created. Indigenous data sovereignty, open data principles, and health equity should also be framed into data collection and tools. These local and regional mitigation and adaptation strategies to combat direct and indirect human health effects related to a changing climate can be informed by EO in conjunction with community engagement, outreach, and inclusion.

Climate change is one of the most important public health issues in the United States, and for the U.S. Government to maintain leadership and coordination in its research and response, it will be necessary to foster transdisciplinary and multisectoral approaches to integrating EO data with health data to mitigate the health impacts of climate change. The U.S. Global Change Research Program's Climate Change and Human Health Working Group (CCHHG) is an interagency working group consisting of 14 Federal agencies. Their charge is to be the entry point for coordination across the U.S. Government on climate and health issues. Many members of this group work at the intersection of EO and human health or are leaders in similar groups such as the GeoHealth Community of Practice, World Health Organization-World Meteorological Organization Joint Climate Health Programme, and the Global Heat and Health Information Network. Natural hazards, impacts, and prediction tools are used by Federal and sub-national decisionmakers, community groups, and researchers. The National Integrated Drought Information System was authorized by Congress in 2006 to coordinate and integrate drought research and establish a national drought early warning system. This tool provides indicators of drought, drought forecast, risk assessment, timely information on drought conditions, and a framework for education and public awareness. Air quality is highly important to track, especially in relation to heat, which can have compounding effects, particularly for communities that are historically underserved. NASA's HAQAST (Health and Air Quality Applied Sciences Team) is a collaborative community of researchers that partner with public health and air quality organizations to combine NASA data for public benefit. Community tools, climate reports, and assessments can be used by the public for education, outreach, informing decision-makers, and creating local solutions. The Department of Health and Human Services' Office of Climate and Health Equity has a monthly Climate and Health Outlook that provides timely regional information on drought, extreme heat, hurricane, wildland fire, Lyme disease, and pollen with information on specific vulnerabilities.

#### <span id="page-14-0"></span>*Understand, assess, predict, and project the impacts of climate change, including extreme events, on Tribes and Indigenous Peoples [10%]*

Climatic changes and extreme events such as extreme heat, severe storms, wildland fires, flooding, drought, and sea level rise may bring significant impact to Tribes and Indigenous Peoples. Potential for disasters could result from the climate extremes themselves and from the exposure and vulnerability of human and natural systems. Tribal and Indigenous communities are often disproportionately impacted by climate change due to their more direct reliance on natural resources for their livelihoods, cultural practices, and spiritual beliefs. These communities also face unique challenges, such as limited resources and infrastructure, that make it challenging to adapt to the impacts of climate change.

Indigenous communities in coastal areas, such as the Inupiat and Yup'ik peoples living in Alaska, rely on the ocean for subsistence hunting and fishing. EO systems provide valuable data on sea level rise, coastal erosion, changes in sea ice extent, and permafrost thaw, helping these communities assess the impacts of climate change on their coastal habitats and plan adaptation measures. In California, Indigenous communities like the Karuk Tribe have partnered with scientists to analyze satellite data to assess wildfire risks and develop strategies for managing fire-prone landscapes using traditional ecological knowledge. By

integrating traditional knowledge with scientific expertise and technological tools, these communities can develop informed strategies for adaptation, resilience, and sustainable development in a changing climate.

This KO is essential for Federal agency missions in promoting social justice and protecting cultural resources. Understanding the impacts of climate change on Indigenous Peoples' traditional livelihoods, such as hunting, fishing, and agriculture, helps inform Indigenous-led adaptation strategies to maintain sustainable resource management and economic resilience. By assessing the impacts of climate change on Indigenous lands and cultural heritage, societies can support Indigenous communities adapt their cultural practices and rituals to changing environmental conditions while preserving Indigenous knowledge and maintaining their cultural identities. Predicting and projecting climate change impacts also informs policies and programs that address systemic inequalities of disproportionate impacts of climate change on vulnerable Indigenous communities, ensures Indigenous rights and sovereignty, and promotes social justice and equity.

#### <span id="page-15-0"></span>**Facilitating Societal Responses to Climate Vulnerability and Change [25%]**

Societies' responses to climate variability and change cover a diverse range of strategies from adaption to the impacts and mitigation to direct action to stem the loss of biodiversity. Responses are inherently social actions. However, the Federal Government has a responsibility to support the development of effective strategies and policies to adapt to and mitigate the impacts of climate change.

An understanding of the social context and consequences is essential to ensure environmental justice and equity. Many solutions are potentially transformative with large-scale technological and societal changes, and decision-makers will need to exhibit and communicate their understanding of the consequences of their actions. Understanding the costs, benefits, and risks of effective climate change adaption and mitigation strategies and providing information stewardship and data management at scales from global to local will empower the most impacted communities to prepare and effectively respond.

#### <span id="page-15-1"></span>*Evaluate the costs, benefits, risks, and effectiveness of climate change mitigation, including strategies to reduce anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions or influence greenhouse gas sources, sinks, and concentrations [5%]*

This KO focuses on understanding various mitigation strategies, ranging from high-technology solutions like renewable energies and energy-efficient equipment to changes in management practices and consumer behavior, to reduce anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions or influence greenhouse gas sources, sinks, and concentrations. Additionally, protecting and enhancing natural carbon sinks like forests, wetlands, and oceans through green agriculture, aquaculture, and silviculture is an integral part of mitigation efforts. The unique challenges encompass evaluating the trade-offs, effectiveness, potential unintended consequences of climate intervention strategies, and managing the complexities of a multifaceted approach towards climate change mitigation.

Achieving this KO relies heavily on not only EO systems data, but also various modeling tools, including Earth system models, integrated assessment models, and impacts-adaptation-vulnerability models. These models help to estimate mitigation costs, expected benefits, and societal impacts in both the short and long term. Combining these tools in appropriate ways is a growing area of research that can optimize societal strategies for addressing climate change. Incorporating observations to drive and test these models is critical for understanding the feasibility and effectiveness of climate intervention approaches. As the science matures, it will be important to assess which observations and data are most critical for addressing the most pressing societal concerns related to climate change, ensuring that mitigation strategies are informed by the best available information.

Climate change mitigation efforts contribute to moving towards a low-carbon society, which can help minimize the adverse impacts of projected climate variability and change. A comprehensive approach to mitigation can address current climate hazards, poverty, unequal access to resources, food insecurity, and

other factors that exacerbate vulnerability to climate change. Furthermore, evaluating mitigation options helps to ensure that resources are allocated effectively, leading to more sustainable economic growth and improved quality of life for citizens.

#### <span id="page-16-0"></span>*Evaluate the costs, benefits, risks, and effectiveness of climate change adaptation strategies and investments [5%]*

This KO aims to evaluate the different adaptation strategies and investments that are being developed to address the impacts of climate change, including rising sea levels, extreme weather events, and changing precipitation patterns. This assessment also takes into account the costs and benefits of these strategies, as well as their associated risks and effectiveness. The scope of this objective is broad and multidisciplinary, encompassing economic, social, environmental, and infrastructural aspects.

Climate change adaptation refers to the adjustments and modifications that societies and ecosystems make to better cope with the adverse effects of climate change, such as sea level rise, increasing temperatures, and extreme weather events. Some climate change impacts on human and environmental systems can be addressed through preventive action. Thinking ahead about the impacts of climate change on these sectors is essential for communities to reduce risks and lower the long-term costs of damage resulting from climate change. Built, natural, and human systems already have some experience with wide fluctuations in weather events and climate conditions (e.g., flooding and heat waves), and most of these systems are equipped to deal with fluctuations within a certain range as, for example, are illustrated by flood zone maps. This is characterized as a system's "adaptive capacity." Nature has evolved to tolerate expected fluctuations based on historical patterns. Human systems are engineered to tolerate specific expected conditions. As climate change continues, systems and sectors can be stressed beyond their current adaptive capacities. Identifying where systems reach these breaking points is critical for identifying a community's vulnerability to climate change.

Planned anticipatory adaptation has the potential to reduce vulnerability and realize opportunities associated with climate change, regardless of autonomous adaptation. Adaptation facilitated by public agencies is an important part of societal response to climate change. Implementation of adaptation policies, programs, and measures should have immediate and future benefits.

Adaptations to current climate and climate-related risks (e.g., recurring droughts, storms, floods, wildfires, and other extremes) generally are consistent with adaptation to changing and changed climatic conditions. Adaptation measures are likely to be implemented only if they are consistent with or integrated with decisions or programs that address non-climatic stresses. Vulnerabilities associated with climate change are rarely experienced independently of non-climatic conditions. Impacts of climatic stimuli are felt via economic or social stresses, and adaptations to climate (by individuals, communities, and governments) are evaluated and undertaken in light of these conditions.

The costs of adaptation often are marginal to other management or development costs. To be effective, climate change adaptation must consider non-climatic stresses and be consistent with existing policy criteria, development objectives, and management structures. The key features of climate change for vulnerability and adaptation are related to variability and extremes, not only changed average conditions. Societies and economies have been making adaptations to climate for centuries. Most sectors, regions, and communities are reasonably adaptable to changes in average conditions, particularly if the changes are gradual. But losses from climatic variations at extremes are substantial and, in some sectors, increasing. These losses indicate that autonomous adaptation has not been sufficient to offset damage associated with temporal variations in climatic conditions. Communities, therefore, are more vulnerable and less adaptable to changes in the frequency or magnitude of conditions, especially extremes, which are inherent in climate change. The degree to which future adaptations are successful in offsetting adverse impacts of climate change will be determined by success in adapting to climate change, variability, and extremes.

The data from EO systems are used to monitor the effectiveness of different adaptation strategies and investments and to identify areas where additional action is needed. Evaluating the costs and benefits of different adaptation strategies is an essential component of Federal agencies' missions, since this ensures that resources are used efficiently, and investments are made in the most effective strategies.

#### <span id="page-17-0"></span>*Provide data needed to support national, regional and local impact assessments and the identification of highly vulnerable systems, regions, and populations [30%]*

The impacts of climate change on various regions and populations depend upon the intersection of climate with local exposure and vulnerability. Exposure and vulnerability are dynamic and varying across temporal and spatial scales, and they depend on economic, social, geographic, demographic, cultural, institutional, governance, and environmental factors. Individuals and communities are differentially exposed and vulnerable based on inequalities expressed through levels of wealth and education, available infrastructure and information, disability, and health status—as well as gender, age, class, and other social and cultural characteristics. Climate changes and extremes that have particularly profound, sometimes catastrophic impacts on vulnerable regions include storms such as hurricanes and tornados, droughts and floods, sea level rise and coastal storm surge, and extended high temperatures.

Climate justice on local, national, and global levels would seek to protect at-risk populations that are disproportionately affected by climate change. The social context for this is on underserved and vulnerable geographies and populations both globally and nationally, as these groups are particularly susceptible to climate change because of the geography of the area and the vulnerabilities of the inhabiting populations. Negative human health effects on variable and vulnerable populations due to changing climate are concerning, as health threats are not expected to produce parallel effects among all individuals. Vulnerable communities are least able to respond and adapt to climate change. These include minority communities, Indigenous people, geographically isolated groups, and those who are socioeconomically disadvantaged and already experiencing poor environmental quality. Local and regional mitigation and adaptation strategies are needed for citizens and leaders to combat direct and indirect human health effects related to a changing climate.

Collectively, EO systems tend to focus on industrialized parts of the planet. Often, they could be deployed more broadly or strategically to gather data on areas for which information is relatively sparse and where it could greatly benefit more of the populations that are most at risk from climate change. In addition to human populations, certain natural systems are particularly vulnerable to climate change. Examples include ecosystems and species that have evolved under certain climate conditions and are unable to evolve or migrate fast enough to adapt to climate change, such as coral reef bleaching.

Meeting this KO is crucial for Federal agencies' missions, as it enables policymakers to make informed decisions on funding and resources. Furthermore, providing data in an accessible way to support national, regional, and local impact assessments is essential for ensuring that adaptation measures are tailored to the specific needs of different regions and communities.

#### <span id="page-17-1"></span>*Provide communication services, stakeholder engagement, user education, and support tools to assist decision-making related to climate change adaptation efforts [10%]*

Climatic changes such as extreme heat, severe storms, flooding, drought, and sea level rise pose real threats to the human-engineered and natural environments of the United States and world. Stakeholder engagement is also a crucial component of this objective to ensure that diverse perspectives and needs are considered in decision-making processes.

Observations and modeling suggest that documented changes, especially in recent decades, have been driven in large part by human influences on the climate system. But regardless of the causes of climate change, or ongoing policy deliberations about the solutions, communities must begin preparing for the expected changes and adapting to those that are already occurring. A fundamental starting point for identifying vulnerabilities and developing adaptation action plans is to understand the most likely changes in local climate based on current trends and projections of temperature, precipitation, and storm patterns. Understanding these changes will help society begin to identify the specific risks that climate change poses to its community and consider how best to prepare for such change. Understanding existing and projected changes in the climate system is a fundamental starting point for local communities to develop plans and take actions to address how those changes impact their residents, resources, and infrastructure.

For example, the restoration of wetlands has great potential for improving carbon sequestration. Additionally, large infrastructure projects such as dams, power plants, and water supply from distant areas can have planning horizons of a decade or more with life expectancies of 30 to 50 years, and projected climatic changes must now be included in the planning stages of these projects. Engagement of public and private entities requires the preparation of climate data and information into formats that are at the appropriate temporal and spatial scale. These data should also be useful and understandable to nonscientists; information and education on the uncertainties as well as the expected risks are critical. Information will need to be presented on easy-to-navigate websites, in written materials, and through personal engagement between scientists and stakeholders.

This objective poses unique challenges, as it requires effective communication and engagement with stakeholders with different levels of expertise and understanding of the climate system. EO data and tools need to be developed to meet different needs while maintaining accuracy.

Meeting this objective will lead to various societal benefits, including reduced vulnerability to climate change impacts, increased resilience of ecosystems and communities, and improved economic stability. Additionally, this objective can promote awareness and education about climate change and its impacts, leading to increased public engagement and support for climate action.

#### <span id="page-18-0"></span>*Empower communities, in particular marginalized and traditionally underserved groups, to strengthen their adaptive capacity, increase resilience, and to prepare for and mitigate climate change impacts [15%]*

Marginalized and traditionally underserved groups include low-income communities, Indigenous peoples, people of color, and people with disabilities. This objective recognizes that these groups are often disproportionately affected by climate change due to social, economic, and political factors that limit their access to resources, opportunities, and decision-making processes. The scope of this KO is to provide these communities with the necessary tools, resources, and support to adapt to climate change impacts and increase their resilience. To do this, we not only need better and more customized communication systems, but also data products that are more appropriate to the task. Higher level products that interpret EO in a way that integrates well with the specific decision-making systems in use in these communities are essential. Lower latency products can also save lives, but they need to be deployed in a way that they can be easily used.

Compared to other KOs, this objective emphasizes the importance of addressing social equity and justice concerns related to climate change adaptation. It requires a participatory approach that involves collaboration with these communities to co-create solutions that meet their needs and priorities. Nevertheless, EO systems provide fundamental data for community-based planning development. For example, the Environmental Protection Agency's EJSCREEN tool integrates satellite imagery, demographic data, and environmental indicators to assess environmental and health risks in communities across the United States. This environmental justice mapping tool informs equitable allocations of resources and targeted interventions to address environmental justice concerns and disparities in marginalized communities. EO data also provide real-time information on extreme weather events, natural disasters, and infrastructure damage, which enables communities to assess risks, develop evacuation plans, and coordinate emergency response actions. For example, during Hurricane Harvey in 2017, satellite imagery from NASA and other agencies helped emergency responders and local authorities monitor flood extents, assess

damages, and prioritize rescue and recovery efforts in affected communities, including marginalized neighborhoods and low-income areas.

#### <span id="page-19-0"></span>*Provide data management and information stewardship in service of climate change adaptation efforts [10%]*

This objective involves archiving, effectively documenting and delivering data on climate dynamics, extremes, and change to understand and describe impacts, vulnerability, and risk. It also involves building and maintaining the advanced cyberinfrastructure necessary to enable and support decision-making processes for mitigation and adaptation planning. As the volume of EO data continues to grow, greatly expanded management and stewardship are necessary to meet the challenge of curating and harnessing these dynamic and extensive climate data.

Global collaboration in data management is essential for maximizing accessibility, transparency, reliability, and usability of climate data and information; information stewardship ensures the data and information are reproducible and compatible with other products or systems. For example, archiving of National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) data and information according to Federal Government standards allows for reproducibility and certification of data authenticity to meet the needs of climate data users for transparency. This capability, such as through the NOAA NCEI Common Access system, allows users to conduct investigations into transportation accidents, to build rate cases for energy costs, and to settle legal disputes. Furthermore, interagency collaboration boosts the resilience of data infrastructure by avoiding duplication of efforts, promoting synergies, and minimizing the vulnerability of data to loss or corruption.

#### <span id="page-19-1"></span>*Enable the U.S. to collaborate with national and international partners and provide leadership on the global stage to address climate change [20%]*

This KO involves ensuring the United States continues working with (and helping lead) domestic and international partners to develop and implement EO policies, programs, and technologies that monitor our environment and enable effective climate change action. By fostering collaboration between the climate research community and decision-makers, from the local, State, Tribal, national, and international levels, the U.S. EO enterprise can inform adaptation strategies that protect infrastructure, communities, and ecosystems from climate change impacts. Transboundary activities that rely on collaborative EO products and services include efforts to monitor and report greenhouse gas emissions, increase the resilience of communities and ecosystems to climate impacts, monitor ocean health, and promote sustainable development.

The United States has a history as a reliable and responsible international partner when undertaking technically complex EO. The success of this KO relies heavily on the willingness to tackle the climate crisis with technology and comprehensive EO and monitoring with the continued leadership to promote policies ensuring full and open access to environmental data around the world.

This KO is critical to Federal agencies' missions largely because climate and environment data are crucial for decision-making, including for monitoring weather and climate variability, real-time agricultural activity, land use and land cover mapping, and water availability. As environmental observables are inherently transboundary, the U.S. Government's international obligations related to EO are predominantly intergovernmental in nature and are rooted in agreements related to intergovernmental organizations including the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) and the Group on Earth observations (GEO).

The Key Products, Services, and Outcomes (KPSOs) categorized under this KO of the Climate SBA Value Tree structure exemplify the many ways in which the United States continues to lead on the global stage in addressing climate change with a science-led, evidence-based, sensor- and satellite-enabled collaborative approach.

#### <span id="page-20-0"></span>*Support the environmental stewardship activities of Tribes and Indigenous Peoples and their capacity to mitigate climate change impacts [5%]*

This KO recognizes the unique relationship and responsibilities of Tribes and Indigenous Peoples to their ancestral lands, natural resources, and the environment. This objective also recognizes the need to respect and incorporate the cultural values and traditional ecological knowledge of Tribes and Indigenous Peoples while also meeting the scientific and technical standards required for environmental protection and climate change mitigation.

Federal agencies, such as USGS, NASA and NOAA, have initiated programs aiming to build partnerships with Indigenous communities to address climate change impacts using Earth system science and data analytics. These programs support projects that integrate traditional ecological knowledge with EO data to enhance community resilience and management of forest health, water resources, and wildlife habitats in the face of climate change.

## <span id="page-21-0"></span>**Abbreviations and Acronyms**



#### <span id="page-22-0"></span>**Annex B: Climate Summary Table**

The ranking in this table reflects the observing systems that the Federal community is currently relying on and does not include new/upcoming systems that may have value in the future for the Climate SBA. The ranking is determined by the number of Climate KPSOs impacted. The ranking of an Earth Observation Input only applies in the context of the Climate SBA. Any given Earth Observation Input may be ranked either higher or lower for other SBAs and for the Earth observation enterprise as a whole.











#### <span id="page-27-0"></span>**Annex C: Climate Full Results Table**

The ranking in this table reflects the observing systems that the federal community is currently relying on and does not include new/upcoming systems that may have value in the future for the Climate SBA. The ranking is determined by the weights in Annex A, which were developed by federal subject matter experts. The ranking of an Earth Observation Input only applies in the context of the Climate SBA. Any given Earth Observation Input may be ranked either higher or lower for other SBAs and for the Earth observation enterprise as a whole.



















































































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