

GAO's Climate Change Work

Limiting the Federal Government's Fiscal Exposure by Better Managing Climate Change Risks

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About GAO

- GAO is an independent, nonpartisan agency that works for the U.S. Congress.
- Often called the "congressional watchdog," GAO investigates how the federal government spends taxpayer dollars.
- GAO's work is primarily done at the request of congressional committees or is mandated by public laws or committee reports.



Climate Change is a High-Risk Issue

- Every 2 years at the start of a new Congress, GAO calls attention to agencies and program areas that are high risk due to their vulnerabilities to fraud, waste, abuse, and mismanagement, or are most in need of transformation.
- GAO designated climate change as a high risk issue in 2013—see *Limiting the Federal Government's Fiscal Exposure by Better Managing Climate Change Risks* (GAO-17-317).
- Climate change is a cross-cutting issue, affecting many areas and teams across GAO.

Limiting the Federal Government's Fiscal Exposure by Better Managing Climate Change Risks

- GAO has identified federal fiscal exposure to climate risks in 5 areas:
 - infrastructure,
 - insurance,
 - technical assistance,
 - disaster assistance, and
 - strategic planning.
- GAO is focused on saving taxpayer money in the long term through enhanced resilience.

How does GAO audit climate change issues?

- Recent audits have focused primarily on actions the federal government can take to adapt to the effects of climate change and build resilience.
- For example, GAO:
 - Was asked to assess the Department of Defense's (DOD) actions to adapt its U.S. infrastructure to the challenges of climate change.
 - Reviewed DOD documents on climate change, infrastructure planning, and funding processes; interviewed cognizant officials; and visited or contacted a sample of sites in various regions and from each military department.

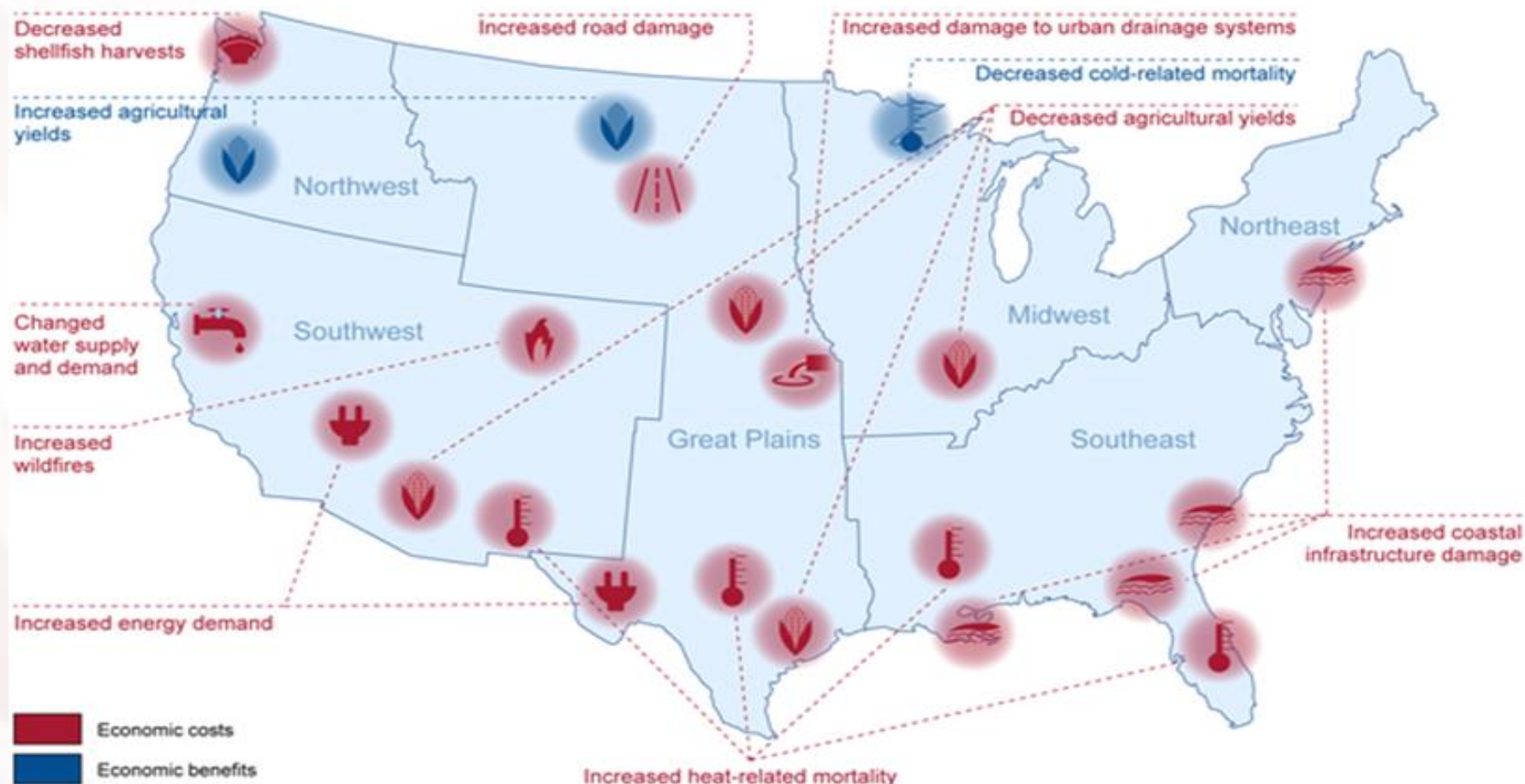
Recent GAO Climate-related Audits

- In the 2014 report ([GAO-14-446](#)), we found that DOD has begun to assess domestic installations' vulnerability to potential climate change impacts and directed its planners to incorporate consideration of climate change into certain installation planning efforts.
- In a follow-up report ([GAO-18-206](#)), we assessed DOD's actions to adapt overseas infrastructure to the expected challenges of climate change. We found that military services have integrated climate change adaptation into its overseas installations' plans and project designs to a limited extent.

Forward-looking GAO Climate-related Audits

- For example, “What options are available to the federal government for managing the effects of climate change?”
- *Climate Change: Information on Potential Economic Effects Could Help Guide Federal Efforts to Reduce Fiscal Exposure (GAO-17-720)*
- *Climate Information: A National System Could Help Federal, State, Local, and Private Sector Decision Makers Use Climate Information (GAO-16-37)*

Potential Economic Effects of Climate Change to Help Reduce Fiscal Exposure (GAO-17-720)



Sources: GAO analysis of Environmental Protection Agency, *Climate Change Impacts in the United States: Benefits of Global Action* (Washington, D.C.: 2015), and Solomon Hsiang et al., "Estimating Economic Damage from Climate Change in the United States," *Science*, vol. 356 (2017); Map Resources (map). | GAO-17-720

Examples of Ongoing Work on Climate Change

- Resilience of Domestic Water Systems to Climate
- Climate Impacts, Domestic Migration, and Managed Retreat (TBD)
- Hazardous Waste Sites, Sea Level Rise, and Extreme Events (TBD)
- Social Cost of Carbon in the United States and Abroad (TBD)
- Impacts of Climate Change on the Nation's Highways (Not Yet Staffed)
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Limiting the Federal Government's Fiscal Exposure by Better Managing Climate Change Risks

- Questions?





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