

An eastern tiger salamander with a black body and yellow spots and bands is shown on a sandy, light-colored ground with some dried leaves and debris. The salamander is facing towards the bottom left of the frame.

CLIMATE ACTION WORKS

Summary Report
January 2020



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The eastern tiger salamander requires vernal pools to breed. Vernal pools are highly susceptible to climate change as local weather conditions become more variable.



CORPORATE-DRIVEN. COMMUNITY-MINDED. BIODIVERSITY-BASED.

Wildlife Habitat Council (WHC) Climate Action Works is funded through a grant from ArcelorMittal, the global steel and mining company.

Climate Action Works seeks to build a framework that engages corporate landowners in leveraging their lands for climate mitigation and adaptation strategies that promote community resilience and ecosystem health. This framework directly supports ArcelorMittal's stated objectives of increasing environmental sustainability and creating more sustainable communities.

The goal of Climate Action Works is to increase awareness by business of the potential for natural climate solutions and identify a set of ecological stewardship options for diverse corporate lands.

Through this process, WHC seeks to inspire more companies to take action on their lands that meet their climate mitigation and adaptation goals.

Climate Action Works meeting summary

October 10, 2019

Silver Spring, Maryland, USA

“As a company...we believe we have a responsibility to improve the ecosystem, not only in the communities where we do business but across the globe. It’s a part of our responsibility to help make the world better.” Kevin Butt, Environmental Sustainability Director, Toyota Motor North America

The very minimum the private sector must do to be recognized for nature-based climate solutions is ‘act.’

This simple statement reflects the sentiment of a gathering of conservation, corporate and climate professionals convened by WHC through its Climate Action Works initiative.

The initiative seeks to answer a series of questions that will inform the creation of a framework to encourage corporations to view their lands as having potential for both climate mitigation and adaptation.

Three questions were asked at the October 10th meeting:

- 1 Is there a place for climate action on corporate lands within the existing climate space?
- 2 Can nature-based climate action have value on a variety of corporate lands or at a variety of scales?
- 3 Can nature-based climate action on corporate lands positively impact community resilience efforts?

The answer to all three questions was ‘yes’ but the following five challenges were identified and discussed:

There is a need for more information for education and reporting purposes

There is an admitted lack of knowledge across industry sectors about nature-based solutions to climate and what they can achieve. Existing information was deemed to be incomplete and uncertain, and it is acknowledged that the link between climate and nature as a solution has not been fully communicated.

From mitigation to adaptation, corporate professionals expressed a strong need to better understand best practices but also to be able to communicate value across the company. A common language regarding nature-based solutions is needed in a format accessible to private sector employees.

Information, data and language about nature-based solutions are also required to satisfy the ubiquitous corporate reporting need.

Expressing frustration with the existing reporting initiatives, private sector practitioners called for standardized tracking of nature-based solutions that would be locally meaningful yet globally valuable i.e., site-specific efforts would be measured in the context of the community, but multiple efforts could be consolidated for corporate-wide value. Ideally, monitoring and measurement would apply to all corporate locations across a company's entire footprint.

Assessing the impacts of corporate climate action for reporting into a suite of initiatives is necessary to mainstream action across corporate lands. A secondary opportunity to encourage corporate lands to contribute data to inform management decisions for climate action off-site was suggested in recognition that corporate locations have potential as study sites.

The diversity of scale of available corporate lands could be a challenge to an integrated strategy

While companies have millions of acres of land and significant footprints, most corporate land is not contiguous, and it varies in size from small fragments in urban locations to large swaths in rural and wilderness areas. Is any acreage too small to contribute to a climate change solution? WHC already helps companies connect diverse conservation projects of varying sizes and in multiple locations into a coherent message and metric. Climate action can be addressed

through the same approaches.

A distinction can be drawn between the potential of corporate lands to contribute to community needs or corporate needs. A nature-based climate solution at a local facility may be at a scale to have more meaning for a local community's resilience efforts than to a corporate-wide climate commitment.

Corporate contributions to community solutions have value

WHC's three decades of experience working with corporations shows that successful site-based actions correlate with strong local ownership by employees and community members. Nature-based solutions for climate can have the same sense of ownership if the design and implementation are place-based. There exists untapped potential for corporate sites to contribute to existing community-based climate adaptation planning efforts, as well as

for local government to recognize the potential of corporate lands.

Corporate facilities each have their own vulnerabilities to climate which are specific to their location. Nature-based solutions at these facilities can contribute to or mitigate these vulnerabilities and benefit local adaptation and resiliency planning, but must be done in an open, collaborative forum between all parties.

Corporate expertise can be harnessed and enhanced with partnerships

Most large private sector entities are involved with climate plans whether as part of a transition to a low-carbon future or in an effort to address climate risk. There is an opportunity to weave nature (as a possible solution) into these plans to highlight the availability of nature-based solutions to address many of the challenges. Because corporate climate plans exist outside of the political world, they have the power to

lead and drive nature-based solutions from theory into practice.

Implementation of these solutions come with a risk of maladaptation. Partnerships with conservation groups can provide the expertise to guide practice and ensure nature-based solutions are enhancing and building on existing efforts.

Within climate solutions, mitigation contributes a global impact while adaptation is local and community based.

“I think nature-based solutions...fill a role that crosses over between mitigation and adaptation, and making a connection between the two isn't always done.”

Janet Peace, Senior Vice President, Policy and Business Strategy, Center for Climate and Energy Solutions

Recognition must be for action

A fourth question was posed to the group. The question, based on the WHC model of recognizing corporate conservation action, was *“What is the bare minimum the private sector must do to be recognized for nature-based climate solutions?”*

Responses to the question were provided through a polling app and

the results strongly suggested that a company should not be recognized for plans, but instead for action. However, a company should not be recognized for action it is already doing but for new efforts implemented to make a contribution to climate mitigation or resilience. The actions must be based in science and quantifiable in some way.

In conclusion

The meeting of three communities—corporate, climate and conservation—highlighted some significant potential for nature-based climate solutions on corporate lands, it also highlighted significant gaps in knowledge and awareness.

As WHC continues to explore and promote the idea of nature-based climate solutions on corporate lands, it will focus on action and seek to highlight successful approaches that answer the questions posed in this meeting while addressing the needs of: the conservation community for solutions

that benefit biodiversity; the climate community for solutions that address mitigation or adaptation; and the corporate community for solutions that are reportable.

In late February 2020, at a meeting of cooperative conservation partners in Northwest Indiana, Climate Action Works will explore what's working on the ground with a special focus on efforts in urban industrial landscapes.

Later in 2020, WHC will host a free online webinar on the topic, as well as distribute a white paper.

50+ ATTENDEES

- Approximately 1/3 each representing climate, conservation and corporate sectors
- Corporate representation included Freeport-McMoRan, BASF, ExxonMobil, CRH Americas, Lehigh Hanson
- Conservation organizations included The Smithsonian Institution, The Nature Conservancy, The Conservation Fund, National Wildlife Federation
- Climate organizations included Center for Climate and Energy Solutions (C2ES), the American Society of Adaptation Professionals, Georgetown Climate Center
- Academics, emergency managers and policy advisors were also in attendance

SPEAKERS

- Kevin Butt, Environmental Sustainability Director, Toyota Motor North America
- Beth Gibbons, Executive Director, American Society for Adaptation Professionals
- Connie Hergert, Vice President, Corporate Real Estate, Ontario Power Generation
- Margaret O’Gorman, President, Wildlife Habitat Council
- Janet Peace, Senior Vice President, Policy and Business Strategy, Center for Climate and Energy Solutions (C2ES)
- Bruce Stein, Chief Scientist and Associate Vice President, National Wildlife Federation

Thank you to ArcelorMittal for funding WHC Climate Action Works.



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