On behalf of the University Corporation for Atmospheric Research (UCAR), a consortium of 77 research universities that manages the National Center for Atmospheric Research, I submit this written testimony regarding the FY 2013 appropriations for the Department of Interior’s (DOI) climate science programs, for the record of the House Committee on Appropriations, Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies. The U.S. Geological Survey’s (USGS) and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service’s (FWS) climate science, adaptation, and education programs contribute a distinct and important component to the country’s efforts to better understand, predict, and respond to the impacts of climate variability on human and natural systems. These programs are perhaps the most important in the entire federal government for helping scientists understand the relationship between climate variability and our nation’s abundant natural resources and treasures. I urge the Subcommittee to fully fund the FY 2013 budget request of $1.102 billion for the U.S. Geological Survey, including $67.7 million for Climate Variability, which funds the nation’s eight regional Climate Science Centers. I similarly urge the Subcommittee to fully fund the $1.5 billion budget request for the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, including $33.1 million for Cooperative Landscape Conservation and Adaptive Science, which funds the nation’s network of Landscape Conservation Cooperatives.

The federal leaders in natural resources science, USGS and FWS are making major contributions to science and data integration on the impacts that climate variability is having and may have in the future on natural resources, including wildlife, ecosystems, and landscapes. These agencies are building the knowledge, capacity, and networks to work with and guide hunters, farmers, natural resource managers, Indian tribes, and resource-dependent businesses toward more sustainable, productive, and resilient management practices. In particular, the establishment of eight regional Climate Science Centers over the last few years to directly support a national network of Landscape Conservation Cooperatives will provide the scientific basis for future adaptive land and water management decisions. By building on the body of basic research conducted by the atmospheric research community and linking it to managed environments and social systems, the DOI’s climate science and adaptation programs have been set up to maximize and leverage the value of the entire national scientific enterprise.

The USGS’s efforts in this field were stepped up with the establishment of a National Climate Change and Wildlife Science Center in 2008 and came to fruition with the recent completion of a national network of eight Climate Science Centers and 22 Landscape Conservation Cooperatives. Through these regionally integrated research and stakeholder hubs, the DOI is now engaged in first-tier research focusing on impacts such as wildlife migration patterns, wildfire risk, precipitation levels and drought, coastal erosion, and invasive species, spearheading how environmental and climate science can be more effective and practical, and thus useful, on the ground. These programs will bring critical regional information to local and regional resource managers and decision makers in order to help them manage cities and towns, tribes, farms, waterways, and public lands.
The eight Climate Science Centers, managed by the USGS, are carried by university consortia within the region to better serve the specific needs of their area as well as the country. They will advance interdisciplinary science in an end-to-end environment by coordinating research among themselves and optimizing investments across the regional network, and they will collaborate with national laboratories to conduct research and develop computer models that can better predict large regional impacts of climate variability on natural resources. The nationwide network serves the Alaska, Pacific Islands, Northwest, Southwest, North Central, South Central, Northeast, and Southeast regions. Landscape Conservation Cooperatives, managed by the FWS, engage with other federal agencies, states, tribes, and local partners, to develop timely products and craft strategies that are based on the science and can be easily translated into adaptive, practical management solutions.

In order to ensure the strength and sustainability of these programs, I hope you will support the FY 2013 budget request of $1.102 billion for the U.S. Geological Survey, including $67.7 million for Climate Variability, and $1.5 billion for the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, including $33.1 million for Cooperative Landscape Conservation and Adaptive Science. Thank you in advance for your support of the DOI’s efforts to contribute to and disseminate knowledge that will enable stakeholders to protect and more efficiently manage their land and our nation’s natural resources and treasures.