

**Select Committee on Energy Independence and Global Warming**

*“Building U.S. Resilience to Global Warming Impacts”*

October 22, 2009

9:30 am

2175 Rayburn House Office Building

**Witness Questions for the Record**

## Questions for John Stephenson, Director, Natural Resources and Environment, GAO:

- 1) Are New York City, Maryland, King County and the United Kingdom continuing to update their respective climate change plans to reflect changing climate data from the time they first came up with a climate plan? Since there's a lot of variability in the climate, isn't it possible that data collected a couple of years ago may be out of date, thus necessitating updates?
- 2) How extensive are the baseline data collected by these sites? How will officials determine if the measures they propose to address their climate concerns are indeed having an impact? (For example, Maryland lacks baseline data on certain Chesapeake Bay species such as the blue crab and striped bass, so it will be hard for the State to determine the success – or failure – of its adaptation measures.)
- 3) In Table 1 of the GAO report (*Page 2, Table 1: Current and Projected Impacts of Climate Change in the United States*), the point is made that, "The destructive energy of Atlantic hurricanes has increased in recent decades." Can you explain whether this is intended to mean that storm intensity has increased, or is the 'destructive energy' a reflection of increased damage on land due to a greater number of houses and structures built in hurricane path areas over the years?
- 4) Given the unique climate challenges of each community, e.g. water issues in the West versus sea-level increases in coastal states, how effective can the **federal** government be in taking action on climate change adaptation? Isn't this a situation where states and communities can do a better job of explaining to the federal government what actions they need to take rather than the other way around?
- 5) Recognizing the challenges facing people who live near the water, is it time that the federal government got out of the business of insuring individuals living in climatically fragile areas?
- 6) According to Page 32 of the GAO report, "The government officials who responded to our questionnaire identified the lack of funding for adaptation efforts as both the top challenge related to awareness and priorities and the top overall challenge explored in our questionnaire." Given our current economic environment, how do you suggest government officials explain to the public that more funds should be spent on future climate change projections at the expense of pressing current tangible problems like health care?
- 7) Why do you suppose certain States and local governments are further along in developing and implementing climate change adaptation measures? Could it be that those that have a need to address a problem are doing so and those that don't are focusing on other pressing needs?
- 8) In a letter responding to the GAO report (Appendix IV), the Council on Environmental Quality identified several areas of concern with the report regarding: methodology, cost/benefit and uncertainty, and planning vs. implementation. Can you address these concerns?

## Questions for Eric Schwaab, Deputy Secretary, Maryland DNR:

- 1) Where would you rank climate change among the other issues that might affect Maryland residents, such as unemployment, health care, education, etc?
- 2) Will the Maryland Climate Change Commission continue to update its Climate Action Plan to reflect changing climate data? Since there's a lot of variability in the climate, isn't it possible that data collected a couple of years ago may be out of date, thus necessitating updates in Maryland's outlook for its climate future?
- 3) How is the state of Maryland approaching the issue of baseline data collection? For example, since Maryland lacks baseline data on certain Chesapeake Bay species such as the blue crab and striped bass, how will you determine the success – or failure – of the Climate Action Plan on their population numbers?
- 4) You state in your testimony that, "Federal financial support is imperative to protect coastal communities, natural resources and the national interest from the impacts of climate change." How much money do you need?
- 5) You suggest the creation of a permanent ocean trust fund that could be funded through a greenhouse gas cap and trade program. Do you believe that when the energy bills of Maryland residents go up – as they inevitably will based on any analysis of a federal cap and trade program – this will be a popular funding source for an ocean trust fund?
- 6) As part of your suggestion that "we avoid future risk by restricting new growth and development in areas we already know are extremely vulnerable," do you support the termination of the federal government's practice of providing flood insurance for individuals living in climatically fragile areas?
- 7) On the issue of green jobs, do you think that Maryland residents are more concerned about climate change, or the challenges of finding employment?

## **Questions for Stephen Seidel, Vice President for Policy Analysis and General Counsel, Pew Center:**

- 1) Dr. Green's paper, which has been submitted for the record, includes a chart showing that since 2000, the rate of our planet's warming has "flattened out and begun to decline." How do you respond to this and other similar claims?
- 2) You state that, "We must take action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to limit both the rate of climate change and the ultimate magnitude of that change." Do you apply this imperative toward developing countries like China and India?
- 3) How do you respond to claims that too much weight is placed on the effects of anthropogenic greenhouse gases on the Earth's atmosphere?
- 4) How much of the economic loss suffered in the US due to natural disasters is a result of extensive development on our coasts and in other vulnerable regions?
- 5) What other countries' adaptation programs did you review for your report?
- 6) In developing adaptation plans, what climate change scenario should program managers consider? For example, when building near the sea, should they plan for a 1-foot rise in sea levels? 10 feet? What about a decrease in sea levels?
- 7) You present a comprehensive plan supporting the creation of a National Climate Service, but you remain silent on the issue of cost. What observations do you have on the cost of creating a National Climate service, and the source of funding for this Service?

## **Questions for Dr. Kenneth Green, Resident Scholar, AEI:**

- 1) You've said that we don't have the means to affordably reduce greenhouse gas emissions, but many environmentalists and government officials claim that we can switch to renewable energy. Can you explain why you disagree with that?
- 2) You mention in your testimony that affordable energy is critical to our economic prosperity, which you describe as the "wellspring" of our resilience and well-being. Can you elaborate on that?
- 3) You say that you believe that manmade greenhouse gases are much weaker than the IPCC says they are at causing global warming. Can you explain why you believe that?