



A Review of the U.S. Global Change Research Program's Strategic Plan

Committee to Advise the U.S. Global Change Research Program, National Research Council

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The U.S. government supports a large, diverse suite of activities that can be broadly characterized as "global change research." Such research offers a wide array of benefits to the nation, in terms of protecting public health and safety, enhancing economic strength and competitiveness, and protecting the natural systems upon which life depends. The U.S. Global Change Research Program (USGCRP), which coordinates the efforts of numerous agencies and departments across the federal government, was officially established in 1990 through the U.S. Global Change Research Act (GCRA). In the subsequent years, the scope, structure, and priorities of the Program have evolved, (for example, it was referred to as the Climate Change Science Program [CCSP] for the years 2002-2008), but throughout, the Program has played an important role in shaping and coordinating our nation's global change research enterprise. This research enterprise, in turn, has played a crucial role in advancing understanding of our changing global environment and the countless ways in which human society affects and is affected by such changes.

In mid-2011, a new NRC Committee to Advise the USGCRP was formed and charged to provide a centralized source of ongoing whole-program advice to the USGCRP. The first major task of this committee was to provide a review of the USGCRP draft Strategic Plan 2012-2021 (referred to herein as "the Plan"), which was made available for public comment on September 30, 2011. *A Review of the U.S. Global Change Research Program's Strategic Plan* addresses an array of suggestions for improving the Plan, ranging from relatively small edits to large questions about the Program's scope, goals, and capacity to meet those goals.

The draft Plan proposes a significant broadening of the Program's scope from the form it took as the CCSP. Outlined in this report, issues of key importance are the need to identify initial steps the Program will take to actually achieve the proposed broadening of its scope, to develop critical science capacity that is now lacking, and to link the production of knowledge to its use; and the need to establish an overall governance structure that will allow the Program to move in the planned new directions.

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