Midwest Climate Adaptation Science Center

Year 2 Highlights

The mission of the Midwest Climate Adaptation Science Center (MW CASC) is to deliver science to help fish, wildlife, water, land and people in the Midwest adapt to a changing climate. We accomplish this mission through partnership building, science production, capacity building, and communications and outreach. In our second year of operation (from Oct. 2022 - Sept. 2023), we achieved strong progress across all of our objectives. Select highlights are shared here.

Partnerships

In year 2, the MW CASC expanded our reach and impact through dozens of partnerships with individuals and management organizations. These relationships are developed and sustained by project teams, MW CASC staff, and members of the Consortium Leadership Team (CLT).

Snapshot: Strengthening Partnerships

Sara Smith and Ally Scott, Midwest Tribal Resilience Liaisons, joined Holly Embke, MW CASC Research Fish Biologist, for a visit to Bay Mills Indian Community in Michigan to learn about concerns and current work related to climate change. BMIC staff are collaborators on an ongoing MW CASC lake sturgeon research project. During the visit, Holly, Sara, and Ally were able to assist with fish sampling, see manoomin (wild rice) restoration efforts and, most importantly, spend time connecting with partners in person.

Science

To date, the MW CASC has supported 39 research projects, including 4 recently completed projects. We received 31 statements of interest in response to our FY24 call for proposals, requesting nearly $12 million.

In Year 2, the MW CASC completed a technical assessment of our science priorities, which informed the development of a Science Agenda that will guide our work through 2026.

Snapshot: Synthesis Research

The MW CASC's first synthesis research project, led by the University of Minnesota, was launched in Year 2. The project explores climate adaptation practice in sectors related to natural resource management and conservation in the Midwest region to identify best practices in adaptation planning that help minimize barriers and leverage opportunities for action.

Capacity Building

The MW CASC engages 30+ graduate students, undergraduate research assistants, and postdoctoral researchers. We facilitate training

and engagement opportunities for students and early career researchers in our network. In Year 2, these included a training on equitable community engagement with the American Society of Adaptation Professionals, a training on ethical engagement with Tribal Nations, a workshop on effective science communication, and a tutorial on climate projections. Students and postdoctoral researchers were also encouraged to share their research with the MW CASC community throughout the year via blogs, posters, and presentations.

Snapshot: The MW CASC Website

We launched our website in February 2023, after an intensive collaborative design process that sought input from staff, leadership, students, researchers, and others. The website now receives 150+ visits a week and plays an important role to centralize and aggregate communications. mwcasc.umn.edu

Year 2 by the Numbers

35
active research projects

Project Topics

5 Water	**4** Non-local species
18 Species	**4** Human dimensions
7 Ecosystems	**1** Climate

$12 million
requested in FY24 SOI

30
students and postdocs

46%
newsletter open rate

600+
people registered for Science Seminars

150+
weekly website visits

250+
new followers on social media

Communications & Outreach

In Year 2, the MW CASC focused on building our audience and engagement across communications platforms. We gained 250+ new followers on LinkedIn and Instagram, had 600+ registrants for our monthly Science Seminars, and achieved a 46% average open rate for our monthly newsletters. MW CASC staff and CLT members also worked to expand our reach at consortium member institutions and regional partners by giving presentations throughout the year.

Staff Highlights

In Year 2, we welcomed new members of the MW CASC team, including Desi Robertson-Thompson as Research Coordinator and Ally Scott as Deputy Tribal Liaison. We also celebrated Olivia LeDee's transition to Regional Administrator.

MW CASC staff contributed to publications, workshops, and more. For example, Marta Lyons, Climate Impacts Ecologist, led the publication of three species status assessments, Holly Embke, Fish Biologist, visited Thailand as an Embassy Science Fellow with the State Department, and Owen McKenna, Research Ecologist, contributed to a synthesis report on science to support grassland management.