

The Resist-Accept-Direct (RAD) framework as a guide for strategic natural resource conservation in a fast-changing world



PRESENTED BY: Gregor Schuurman, PhD

Schuurman is an ecologist with the National Park Service Climate Change Response Program. He works with parks and partners to understand and adapt to a wide range of climate change impacts. His work focuses on 1) incorporating climate science into management and planning, 2) producing and synthesizing management-relevant science, and 3) developing climate change adaptation tools and concepts. He previously worked on T&E species conservation and climate change adaptation with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources and holds Master's degree from the University of Minnesota Dept of Ecology, Evolution, and Behavior and a PhD from the University of Washington Department of Zoology.

Natural resource stewards are increasingly confronting the limits of a conservation and management paradigm that relies on ecological baselines to guide protection, restoration, and other management actions. Intensifying climate change - including accelerated warming, changing disturbance regimes, and more frequent and intense extreme events - combined with effects of more longstanding stressors, is making restoration of past conditions or even 'holding the line' in the face of inexorable human-caused change evermore difficult and costly. In response, managers are increasingly expanding their toolkit to include explicitly and strategically accepting or even directing human-caused ecological trajectories.

New thinking in the National Park Service along these lines is expressed in several related new guidance documents including a report on the Resist-Accept-Direct (RAD) framework. The RAD framework, the culmination of years of collaboration among a diverse set of conservation partners, helps managers make informed, purposeful choices about how to respond to the trajectory of change. This presentation will describe the challenge of ecological transformation, introduce the RAD framework, discuss how applying it is shaped by a range of social factors, and share real-world examples.