



WWF for a living planet®

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The Climate Witness Programme – Scientific Advisory Panel (SAP) Guidelines

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1. Introduction

These Guidelines have been developed to assist members of the Climate Witness Science Advisory Panel (SAP) to develop an understanding of the overall Programme and the specific function of the SAP.

These guidelines outline:

- The programme’s strategic rationale;
- What it means to be a SAP member;
- The process for reviewing Climate Witness testimonials and;
- The opportunities for future collaboration between WWF and research institutions to promote particular climate research.

2. Background to Climate Witness Programme

Climate Witness is a global initiative by WWF that puts a human face to climate change impacts occurring today, thus increasing the sense of urgency and public support for effective climate solutions.

Our initiative is to map out where communities around the world are already affected by climate change, and to communicate what this means for the lives of real people *here and now*.

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We ask Climate Witnesses to share their experiences of climate change with WWF to assist us to inspire stronger action on climate change in the community. We aim to build a movement of individuals who see climate change affecting the world's natural places and who want to be active in addressing this threat.

Climate Witness aims to achieve this by:

- **Empowering people and being inclusive** – involving people in the process of identifying impacts of climate change, rather than telling people what the impacts are.
- **Providing an opportunity to engage** – it establishes a process in which people can engage and talk, rather than just listening to information.
- **Making it real** – Climate Witness connects the issue of climate change to real people feeling actual things, rather than hypothetical people and model projections.
- **Bringing it home** – Showing that climate change is *here & now*, not just in the future, or in far flung nations.
- **Building a network** – it provides a process to engage people who are interested in the issue and connect them with others who are similarly interested.

The Programme also aims to build a database of climate change impacts for future reference. This allows us to monitor where certain impacts are occurring. It also provides the first step towards engaging communities in resilience building and adaptation activities associated with the new climatic conditions.

We have successfully trialled this initiative in the last few years (see www.panda.org/climatewitness), and we are in the process of expanding the project.

3. Why a Science Advisory Panel?

A SAP delivers a key condition of the Climate Witness Programme by providing the ability to distinguish 'anecdotal' stories from real observations that can be linked to climate change impacts. It ensures stories are related to climate change and not just local factors.

The SAP is made up of leading climate scientists mostly, but not exclusively, from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) who are familiar with the latest climate change-related, peer-reviewed literature in specific regions of the world.

As at 31st October 2008, there are 130 [SAP members](#) and the membership will continue to grow as we collect more Climate Witness stories from around the world. A list of these members can be viewed on our [website](#).

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Members of the SAP assess Climate Witness stories for levels of consistency with current scientific knowledge of climate change impacts, which in turn, contributes to a database of information that can be accessed online into the future.

While the primary function of the panel is to review Climate Witness stories, there are opportunities for further involvement in a number of other WWF activities outlined in this document.

4. What it means to be a SAP member

The primary function of a SAP member is to verify the scientific basis of the Climate Witness stories WWF collects from around the world to ensure they are consistent with peer-reviewed literature about climate change impacts already happening today in a particular region.

This requires writing a short scientific review (one page or less) of stories that correspond to your area of expertise.

Participation in the Climate Witness Programme is voluntary and in return we acknowledge your contribution on our global website as well as featuring your name below every Climate Witness stories you review. WWF is also seeking opportunities to promote new climate change research so please feel free to contact the Climate Witness Manager for more information.

There are a number of opportunities for you to become more involved in the Climate Witness Programme and climate change work in the WWF Global Network through attendance at conferences, forums or workshops and interaction with the media. These activities are optional and you can indicate your level interest on the SAP membership details form we will ask you to complete.

4.1 Benefits of being a SAP member

The principal benefit of participating in Climate Witness is to be part of an innovative community that is increasing the public awareness of climate change and building the political will to prevent 'dangerous climate change'.

There are a number of other benefits that include:

- Promotion of individual scientists and associated research institutes;
- Opportunities for further promotion of scientific research and associated organisations;
- Access to data collected from Climate Witnesses on climate change impacts;
- The opportunity to explore research projects with WWF; and
- Attendance at public media events, workshops, conferences or forums.

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4.2 Process for SAP peer review

SAP members will be asked to peer-review one-page 'Climate Witness stories' submitted to us by members of the public.

We ask you to review no more than one Climate Witness story every two months depending on how many we receive dealing with your expertise, and subject to your availability and capacity.

We will only forward stories that are applicable to your specific field of expertise and geographic scope. We do not expect that writing peer reviews will require much if any additional literature research.

Reviews should be completed in English however Climate Witness will consider special circumstances for other languages on a case-by-case basis.

Your review serves to verify that the experiences which our Climate Witnesses are attributing to climate change, are in fact what you as an expert would expect in their region and consistent with current scientific knowledge.

In order to peer review stories and gather data on climate change impacts we have developed a list of categories of impacts and consequences. WWF International climate scientists developed these and they were peer reviewed by a small number of external climate scientists. Please contact the Climate Witness Manager if you require more information.

Some examples of the type of Climate Witness stories we receive can be viewed at: www.panda.org/climatewitness.

Five step process for SAP peer review

Step 1

A WWF liaison person will be appointed to be your main contact and will email you a peer review form to complete. The Climate Witness story requiring review will be appended.

The story will be matched to your area of expertise based on the responses you provided in your SAP Membership Details form.

Step 2

Assess the story's level of consistency with current science by completing the tick box table below.

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A: Is the climate witness story consistent with current peer-reviewed literature about climate change impacts already happening today in that particular region or in a similar region?

- yes
- mostly
- partly
- not at all
- no data for that region

B: Is the climate witness story consistent with anticipated or projected climate change impacts for that region or a similar region in the future?

- yes
- mostly
- partly
- not at all
- no data for that region

C: Are there any experiences described in this climate witness account that are possibly new to the current science in that region?

list a maximum of three here

Step 3

After establishing a level of consistency, you will need to write a short review - up to 250 words - which explains if the observations can indeed be linked to climate change and why.

Tips for writing your climate witness review

Climate Witness is designed to appeal to a broad audience made up of everyday people who, in most cases, do not have any scientific knowledge. We therefore encourage you to follow the guide below when writing your review:

- Write in an anecdotal tone using the first person.
- Use everyday language, not technical language.
- Keep the tone of writing consistent with the testimonial you are reviewing.
- Keep the sentences simple and clear as readers may not speak English as a first language.
- Provide reference links to relevant literature rather than including lots of detail in the text.

Sample SAP peer review:

[Scientific Background prepared by Prof. John E Hay](#)

The observations Linda describes for Aitutaki are consistent with the response of corals to environmental stresses. Given the relatively pristine nature of the Aitutaki lagoon, it is quite possible that the observed event was the result of high sea surface temperatures and/or excessive sunlight. The observations are thus consistent with peer-reviewed literature describing climate-related impacts already being experienced by reef ecosystems.

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The observations for Rarotonga reflect past bleaching events and highlight the delayed recovery of such reef systems when they are suffer stresses, including high pollutant loadings and high sedimentation rates. The latter may be related to climate conditions, but indirectly.

Based on the information provided, my conclusion is that the observations for Aitutaki in particular appear somewhat consistent with peer-reviewed literature about climate impacts already happening today.

Step 4

Please provide at least one reference to the most current scientific report or journal article.

You may also include further links to scientific papers, reports, journals or URL's that contain useful information about the relevant impacts.

Sample peer review URL link:

A paper by Ainsworth et al. which provides additional background information can be downloaded from the website of the new Australian Research Council Centre for Excellence for Coral Reef Studies <http://www.coralcoe.org.au/> Over 200 pdfs of their latest publications are available

Step 5

Email your peer review form back to us for inclusion on the website.

To view how a peer-reviewed story appears on the Climate Witness website visit the website at: www.panda.org/climatewitness

4.3 Other organisational issues

Your personal information and contact details will remain confidential at all times unless authorised by you and your appointed CW SAP Liaison person.

We ask that you seek prior consent from your CW SAP Liaison person if you wish to use the WWF or Climate Witness Programme logo or names, or make a reference to your participation in the Climate Witness Programme.

4.4 Feedback and monitoring of membership

We invite any feedback or suggestions as to how we can improve and enhance this programme and the Science Advisory Panel.

Please do not hesitate to contact the CW SAP Coordinator for any issues that need to be resolved or if you have any questions at any time.

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For more serious concerns, or if you are unable to contact the CW SAP Coordinator or your Liaison person, you can also contact the Climate Witness Manager.

5. WWF Contact

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Appendix 1

Climate Witness Programme Background

Climate Witness (CW) was launched in late 2004. Since then the WWF network has developed initiatives with scientists and communities that have generated significant exposure for WWF's Climate Campaigns in a number of countries. Climate Witness initiatives are run in Australia, Central America, Brazil, China, Fiji, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Kenya, Nepal, Russia, Spain, Switzerland, Tanzania, Tuvalu, the United Kingdom and the United States.

National and international experience with CW across the WWF network shows that CW offers an innovative formula to highlight national and global climate change impacts on people's lives while making the connection with climate change solutions.

The CW Programme is assisting WWF in bringing the human face to climate change impacts occurring *here and now*. It is also increasing the sense of urgency and public support for WWF's climate solutions.

In WWF's view, An Inconvenient Truth, the Stern Review and the IPCC reports have undoubtedly created new momentum around climate solutions, but there is still a need to create a stronger sense of urgency to act to avoid dangerous climate change. Hence our initiative to map out where communities around the world are already affected by climate change and to communicate what this means for the lives of real people today.

The overall goal of the CW initiative is to inspire stronger action on climate change in the community by building a movement of individuals who see climate change affecting our environment and way of life and who want to be active in addressing this threat.

CW is about increasing the sense of urgency and public support for effective solutions by:

- Empowering people and being inclusive – involving people in the process of identifying impacts of climate change, rather than telling people what the impacts are.
- Providing an opportunity to engage – it establishes a process in which people can engage and talk, rather than just listening to information.
- Making it real – Climate Witness connects the issue of climate change to real people feeling actual things, rather than hypothetical people and model projections.
- Building a network – it provides a process to engage people who are interested in the issue and connect them with others who are similarly interested.
- Being '*here and now*' – increasing the sense of urgency for everyone to take action by demonstrating that people '*here and now*' are feeling the impacts of climate change.