Meeting the Moment

A strategic plan for values-based growth and scientific impact

Woodwell Climate Research Center
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MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Knowing where to go next always requires a hard look back, and an even harder look at the road ahead.

I’m incredibly proud of what we’ve accomplished since our founding in 1985: Woodwell Climate has had an outsized influence on climate policy in all the countries and communities we touch, and opportunities to increase this impact grow every day and with every member added to our team.

As we chart our course for the future, we find ourselves in a rapidly changing climate in every sense of the word. We are growing, becoming more diverse and dispersed, broadening our range of expertise, and extending our reach and influence. At the same time, we are faced with ever more devastating impacts of human-caused climate change, a shifting funding landscape, and an even greater urgency to act.

Through an inclusive process involving our Board of Directors, management, scientists, and staff, we have developed a strategic plan to guide us forward through an uncertain future. This plan builds on our strengths and values, with particular focus on the impact of our science, operational and workplace excellence, and sustainable funding.

We have updated our mission statement and clearly articulated the vision and values that guide our work. We conduct our science, external engagement, and internal operations in accordance with these values, and to leverage our greatest strengths: our passionate, world-class staff; our rigorous, cutting-edge science; our strategic partnerships; and our strong reputation. We have also prioritized three strategic initiatives with timely and outsized potential to advance our mission.

The future is both daunting and exciting as we embrace humanity’s most urgent crisis and focus our formidable talent on building a healthy, sustainable, and equitable world. I invite you to join us in the work ahead.

Onward,

R. Max Holmes, President and CEO

THE IMPACT OF OUR SCIENCE
Woodwell Climate is recognized as a global leader in scientific advances and policy influence.

OPERATIONAL AND WORKPLACE EXCELLENCE
Woodwell Climate is an inclusive and respectful workplace with a diverse staff, adequate resourcing for all functions, and management and decision-making structures that are values-aligned and geared for growth.

SUSTAINABLE FUNDING
Woodwell Climate supports staff and institutional priorities through a growing endowment, diverse donor base, and values-aligned corporate relationships.
MISSION

Woodwell Climate Research Center conducts science for solutions at the nexus of climate, people and nature. We partner with leaders and communities for just, meaningful impact to address the climate crisis.

VISION

An equitable, healthy, and sustainable world.
Woodwell Climate conducts its science, external engagement, and internal operations in accordance with our values.

**RESPECT**  We treat others with dignity, understanding that people are our greatest strength.

**INTEGRITY**  We conduct our work ethically and honestly. We set clear, realistic expectations with each other, as well as with our collaborators, partners, and funders to ensure the independence and merit of our work.

**INCLUSION**  We cultivate collaboration, community, and belonging within and beyond our organization. We value diverse experiences, perspectives, and ways of knowing.

**COURAGE**  We say and do what is needed, not what is easy. We honor and encourage independent thought and bold, creative ideas, and support learning through experimentation and failure.

**IMPACT**  We strive to make a meaningful, positive difference in the world. We prioritize work with the greatest potential for societal and environmental benefit and seek opportunities to amplify our influence.

**JUSTICE**  We strive to create a just and equitable working environment within our organization and the communities where we operate; locally and throughout the world.

**TRANSPARENCY**  We conduct our science, operations, and communications in an open and accountable way. We share our methods, learnings, and work products for the greater good.

**EXCELLENCE**  We hold ourselves and our collaborators to the highest standards of rigor, innovation, equity, and inclusion.
The Challenge

The impacts of human-caused climate change worsen with each passing year—this urgent global crisis demands that we find the most effective, efficient, and equitable ways to change our trajectory and make a positive difference in limiting both carbon emissions and future harm. That’s why, at Woodwell Climate, we continue to advance scientific discovery and strategies for data collection, insight generation, and translation of knowledge into meaningful action at local, national, and international levels.

As the climate challenge has grown, so, too, has our organization: we have more staff than ever before, advancing pioneering research around the world. While each new employee expands our capacity to do rigorous, relevant work, we want to ensure that our organization remains nimble at any size, and able to respond quickly to new obstacles and opportunities. It is also critical that we continue to strive to increase diversity and inclusion in our workforce, and foster a sense of belonging for all our staff, embracing differences in who we are and how we work.

A growing organization inevitably faces increasing financial needs—to directly fund our cutting-edge climate research, and also to support administrative resources and the salaries of our skilled staff who steward research from hypothesis to real-world impact. As we face volatility in both our climate and our economy, it is essential that we further diversify our funding sources to remain resilient through an uncertain future.
Our Strengths

We remain undaunted in the face of these challenges because we know our strengths.

Our people are passionate, motivated, and skilled. From our campus in Falmouth, Massachusetts to their remote workspaces around the globe, our staff’s unified commitment to excellence drives our success.

Our science is mission-driven and cutting-edge. We bring to bear a comprehensive toolkit to advance understanding of climate risks and natural systems with the potential to make or break our climate future.

Our partnerships are strategic and synergistic. We identify levers for change and develop powerful working relationships with those able to translate our insights into unique and/or outsized results.

Our reputation is strong. We are widely recognized for our ability to “influence the influencers.” Our experts are sought after and trusted by elected officials, top-tier journalists, and business leaders.

Strategies for Success

Our new Strategic Plan includes both guiding, aspirational goals and pragmatic, actionable strategies to achieve success. Both are key to our organization’s progress—an aspirational goal presents a vision to strive for together, while strategies provide a roadmap of next steps to get us closer.

In the next few pages, we will share with you the ambitious goals driving us through 2025. If you are interested in learning more about the strategies we’ll take to get us there, or how you can support us in achieving a goal, please contact us. We look forward to working together to build a better future.
With a multiscale, complex problem like climate change, action is needed at every level to make significant progress. We’re proud of the many positive developments our science has driven to date, from informing groundbreaking Brazilian legislation that protects 30 million acres of Amazon forest to providing under-resourced municipalities with the climate risk insights they need to craft climate-smart policies. To make the greatest impact, we know we need to focus on supporting resilience efforts and public policy development, prioritizing environmental justice and equity, and investing in our capacity to communicate our stories far and wide. Our singular focus on climate science for change is what inspires us to strive further, and to set goals reaching for even greater impacts of our science in the next few years.

Woodwell Climate is recognized for its cutting-edge fundamental research on the physics of the climate system, ecosystem processes, and effective solutions with both near- and long-term horizons.

Woodwell Climate’s science and engagement have substantial and measurable influence on policy and the global adoption of aggressive climate solutions. Our success is measured by the influence of our work on climate-related goals and actions by decision-makers at all levels of government and in businesses.

Climate justice is fully integrated into every aspect of our work—science, partnerships, policy engagement, and communications.

Woodwell Climate is building on a track record of excellence and impact:

We partnered with the COP26 UK Presidency on a series of workshops with G20 nations and a follow-up report detailing barriers to climate risk-aware decision making.

Working with Wellington Management, we shaped the first guidelines for corporate disclosure of climate risk and provided input to the SEC on climate risk disclosure regulation.

In 2022 alone, our scientists published more than 100 peer-reviewed scientific papers and were quoted or mentioned in over 6,500 news stories.
Strategic Initiatives at Woodwell Climate

Woodwell Climate Research Center is ideally suited to test and disseminate models, tools, and standards that can be implemented widely to bring about systemic change. Within the context of our diverse ongoing science, we’re pursuing three strategic initiatives—bold, ambitious efforts that leverage Woodwell’s pioneering science and innovative partnerships to make measurable, near-term impact in the broader social, financial, and/or policy landscapes. These lines of work are all at different stages, but each is focused around timely needs and opportunities where Woodwell Climate is uniquely positioned to drive change and progress.
Permafrost Pathways

Connecting science, people, and policy for Arctic justice and global climate

**GOAL** Improve the science that supports full and fair accounting of permafrost thaw emissions in carbon budgets and climate policy, and advance equitable strategies that address the impacts of a warming Arctic on local communities and the global climate.

Permafrost Pathways is coordinating a comprehensive monitoring network to improve the tracking and modeling of Arctic permafrost and carbon fluxes; fostering partnerships with local leaders and national policymakers; and harnessing these data to support Arctic community adaptation and drive international climate mitigation policy.

This initiative launched in April 2022 with funding through the TED Audacious project.
Woodwell Climate has cultivated multiple municipal partnerships with cities and towns that have long-term sustainability goals, providing them with the science they need to make climate-smart decisions. Building on the successes of these collaborations, we are expanding the scale of this work to reach even more municipalities and provide risk assessments for larger regions, including countries.

**GOAL** Support the most under-resourced governments with zero-cost risk assessments, and remove barriers to accessing rigorous, transparent, and actionable climate risk information.

Woodwell Climate has cultivated multiple municipal partnerships with cities and towns that have long-term sustainability goals, providing them with the science they need to make climate-smart decisions. Building on the successes of these collaborations, we are expanding the scale of this work to reach even more municipalities and provide risk assessments for larger regions, including countries.
UnLOCS
Unlocking land-based opportunities for climate solutions

**GOAL**  Unlock the global potential of natural climate solutions and drive a fundamental shift in the dynamics of carbon markets by developing innovative models and tools to increase land-based carbon storage and climate mitigation while advancing the needs, goals, and well-being of land stewards and their communities.

Woodwell Climate is uniquely positioned to lead this work based on the breadth and longevity of our pioneering research on natural climate solutions (NCS), our long-standing relationships with stakeholders in key geographies, and our track record of innovative, cross-sector partnerships and collaborative engagement. This is an emerging initiative that leverages previously unrealized synergy between multiple existing projects and partnerships.
Building on 35+ years of excellence, Woodwell Climate has recently entered a phase of rapid growth to meet the increasing challenges of the climate crisis. We’re continuing to scale both our research and operations across the globe, and are transitioning to an organizational structure that maximizes the benefits of having both in-person and hybrid/remote employees. This extraordinary growth also requires thoughtful stewardship along the way to ensure our organization is a nimble and effective changemaker, and an excellent and diverse workplace. The goals we have set for the next few years reflect our commitment to investing in our people and in the resources needed to support their work. We believe the Center is an energizing, values-driven place to work and want to attract individuals who can embody these values, and who are dedicated to our mission and vision.

1. Staff members understand their role(s) in the organization, are supported in their work, are able to meet their commitments while maintaining their work-life balance, and feel connected to each other and to the organization as a whole.

2. Woodwell is recognized as having a diverse, inclusive, fair, respectful, safe, and collaborative working environment.

3. Growth in programs, budgets, and space is successfully and nimbly managed in a constantly changing environment.

4. Woodwell Climate is a leader in its internal sustainability practices.

We are continuously and actively working to make our organization an even better place to work:

Our staff is now over 120 people strong, with approximately 50% remote and over 25% hybrid.

We continue to increase capacity in our People & Culture, Information Systems, Grant Management, Finance, and Facilities functions to more efficiently support our mission.

We have built our operational capacity to support our growth, including the implementation of new systems to manage finances and payroll, employee performance, and travel.
Woodwell Climate’s track record of scientific and policy impact includes newly developed relationships with several significant funders and partners, which have enabled us to leap forward in our scientific breadth, reach, and influence. For the first time in our organizational history, we are supporting our lead scientific investigators with foundational funding, reducing their time spent pursuing traditional grants with low success rates and protracted response times. We have also seen great success from projects awarded funds through our internal granting mechanism, the Fund for Climate Solutions. This support—combined with historic and surging donor interest in climate change—presents the opportunity for more research discretion and leadership than our scientists have ever before experienced. We will continue to pursue transformative partnerships and strategic opportunities to advance our mission with innovation and integrity. Meeting our sustainable funding goals over the next few years will ensure that all of our work is bolstered by a strong foundation of diverse and robust financial resources.

We’re fortunate to have a solid footing to grow from:

Over $6 million has been granted to 53 projects through the internal Fund for Climate Solutions.

Over 30 generous George Perkins Marsh Society members have included Woodwell Climate in their estate plans.

$41 million has been awarded to Permafrost Pathways through the TED Audacious Project.

1. Fundraising is consistently aligned with our budgetary needs, projected growth, goals, strategies, program priorities, and values.

2. Woodwell’s endowment is sufficiently robust to provide meaningful and sustainable funding to advance institutional priorities.
We at Woodwell Climate can see the range of potential futures we face, shaped by the choices we make today. Together with our partners and supporters, we will do everything possible to motivate and enable the urgent action needed to not only avoid catastrophe, but secure a future we can all look forward to. Success is going to take a commitment from all of us. Will you join us?

Max Holmes, President & CEO
Woodwell Climate Research Center