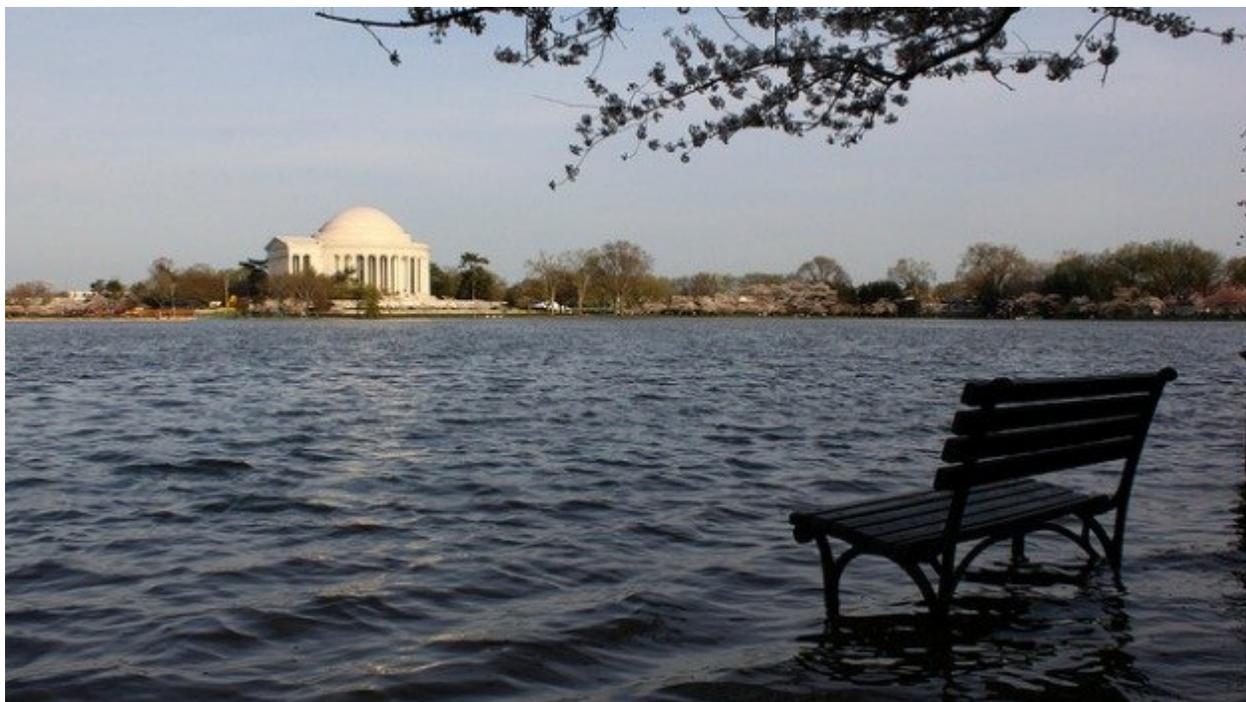




# Climate Change May Spark Debate In Washington, But D.C. Is Preparing For It

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Flooding in the Tidal Basin.

Climate change and how to respond to it may provoke partisan fights in Washington, but that's not stopping the nation's capital from preparing for the consequences of changing weather patterns.

In his 2016 budget proposal, President Obama included \$750,000 for a "climate change adaptation plan to identify climate risks to the District of Columbia, vulnerabilities, and mitigation options." The money would help local, regional and federal agencies plan for possible weather-related incidents, according to the funding request.

"The needs of the Federal sector, District government and private sector in the city are inextricably linked when it comes to preparing for and adapting to a changing climate," it says. "For example, risks from rising seas and flood surge will require action on Federal land along the banks of the Potomac and Anacostia Rivers to protect District and private sector property (and lives)."

Even as political consensus around climate change has been hard to come by in Congress, D.C. and federal agencies have been planning in recent years on how more extreme weather events could affect the nation's capital.

In 2013, the D.C. Department of Transportation prepared a [climate change adaptation plan](#). That same year, the Washington Metropolitan Council of Governments released its own [regional plan](#), and last year the National Capital Planning Commission updated its own [adaptation plan](#).

All of the plans say that climate change could bring more precipitation, more heat and more flooding — both from rising sea levels and larger storms — to D.C.

"The relationship between the federal government and the District is intertwined pretty closely, and so we know that with increasing whether its water levels [and] also severity of weather events, that we need to plan jointly," says Tommy Wells, the acting director of the D.C. Department of Environment.

Wells says that past weather events have impacted the city — both locally and federally. In 2006, a particularly heavy storm led to floods in Federal Triangle, and Constitution Avenue often floods after usual summer thunderstorms. As those weather events get worse, he says, the federal core is likely to suffer more consistent impacts.

Last year, Climate Central [published a map](#) showing how rising sea levels could water from both the Potomac and Anacostia rivers into parts of the National Mall and onto Hains Point.

Those increased chances of flooding have spurred the creation of an inter-agency team made up of local and federal agencies known as the [Silver Jackets](#) to prepare for high-water events. Part of that preparation is the creation of a [\\$291,000 online mapping tool](#) to help local and federal officials better predict what areas of the region could be impacted by flooding.

Though the new federal money is only for joint planning, Wells says that capital investments are already being made — he points to a large water-holding tunnel being dug near McMillan Park to help address flooding in Bloomingdale — and will have to continue to be made to deal with more severe weather conditions.

"We certainly have areas around Southwest and Foggy Bottom, areas that may need retrofits to be sure that we're prepared for a changing climate and changing water levels and a change in the severity of the storms we're seeing," he says.

"A lot of work has already been done, but we can certainly do more," he says.

[http://wamu.org/news/15/02/04/climate\\_change\\_may\\_spark\\_debate\\_in\\_washington\\_but\\_dc\\_is\\_preparing\\_for\\_it](http://wamu.org/news/15/02/04/climate_change_may_spark_debate_in_washington_but_dc_is_preparing_for_it)