



The Impacts of Climate Change and the Trump Administration's Anti-Environmental Agenda in Kentucky

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Just in the past three years, the Trump administration has attempted to roll back at least 95 environmental rules and regulations to the detriment of the environment and Americans' public health. Moreover, the administration refuses to act to mitigate the effects of climate change—instead loosening requirements for polluters emitting the greenhouse gases that fuel the climate crisis. This dangerous agenda is affecting the lives of Americans across all 50 states.

To read the personal stories of Americans impacted by climate change and the effects of the Trump administration's anti-environmental policies in your state, visit OurEnvironment.org.



For citations, please see the web version of this fact sheet.

Between 2017 and 2019, Kentucky experienced two floods, three severe storms, and one freeze. The damages of these events led to losses of at least \$1 billion.

Impacts of climate change

Extreme weather

- In February 2020, southeastern Kentucky experienced a “100-year flood,” in which areas experienced 4 to 6 inches of rain and at least 217 homes were affected.
- In 2019, 755 wildfires burned 11,714 acres in Kentucky. Wildfires in the state are being exacerbated by moderate to intense drought conditions.
- By 2050, Kentucky is projected to see a 95 percent increase in its index of the severity of the widespread drought.

Temperature

- Kentucky currently averages 16 days per year when heat exceeds dangerous levels, but projections indicate that number will quadruple to 72 days per year by 2050. This endangers the lives of the more than 150,000 people in Kentucky who are especially vulnerable to extreme heat.
- Heatwaves are becoming more frequent in Kentucky and are projected to increase from 15 days per year today to 70 days by 2050.
- Kentucky is facing urban heat islands and is ranked fifth among states with the biggest difference between urban and rural temperatures.

- Kentucky’s mosquito breeding season has increased from an average of [117 days](#) per year between 1980 and 1989 to [139 days](#) per year from 2006 to the present, presenting an increased threat of mosquito-borne disease.

Impacts of the Trump administration’s anti-environmental policies

Climate

- In March 2020, the Trump administration announced its [final rule](#) to overturn Obama-era fuel efficiency standards for cars. These weakened fuel standards will lead to [higher greenhouse gas](#) and particulate matter emissions and will cost Kentucky residents [\\$287 million](#) annually. This is particularly troubling in areas like the populous city of Louisville, which, despite years of improvement, has recently seen a [setback in air quality](#) compared with 2012 levels.
- The Trump administration is [attempting](#) to gut climate considerations from major infrastructure projects by [eliminating](#) the “cumulative impact” requirement of the National Environmental Policy Act. This is concerning because Kentucky’s economy relies on its agriculture, tourism, and outdoor recreation industries—all of which are highly dependent on climate and weather conditions.
 - **Agriculture:** There are more than [76,500 farms](#) in the state, and in 2018, agriculture cash receipts of all commodities amounted to [\\$5.9 billion](#).
 - **Tourism:** In 2018, direct visitor spending in Kentucky generated more than [\\$7 billion](#) and supported nearly [95,000 jobs](#).
 - **Outdoor recreation:** The outdoor recreation industry in Kentucky generates [120,000](#) direct jobs and more than [\\$12.8 billion](#) in consumer spending.

Air quality

- Mercury emissions in Kentucky decreased by nearly [85 percent](#) from 2011 to 2017, yet the Trump administration [just undermined limits](#) on the amount of mercury and other toxic emissions allowed from power plants.

Water quality

- In 2019, the Trump administration released a [series of proposed changes](#) loosening regulations of [coal-powered plants and the disposal of coal ash](#), which can [threaten](#) drinking water quality. These deregulations are dangerous for Kentucky, where coal-powered plants generate [5.5 million](#) tons of coal ash annually. Additionally, one of the state’s sites was ranked in the [top 10](#) most contaminated coal ash sites in the nation.

Coal

- Coal company executives, particularly Bob Murray of Murray Energy, have [requested and advocated for rollbacks](#) of more than 15 different environmental rules and protections. These rollbacks include actions such as withdrawing from the Paris climate agreement, repealing and replacing the Clean Power Plan, and slashing the EPA's budget and staff numbers.
 - Though Kentucky is ranked [fifth](#) among the top coal-producing states in 2018, the overall trend in Kentucky and across the United States is a [declining number of coal mines](#). Eastern Kentucky coal production has declined by [87 percent since 1990](#), and statewide coal employment has declined by [30 percent from 2015 to 2016](#).
 - Coal company executives, the Trump administration, and the administration's allies in Congress—including Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell of Kentucky—have left retired coal miners out to dry [by refusing](#) to fully and permanently fund their pensions and provide them with health care options.
 - The continued operations of coal mines during the COVID-19 pandemic present increased health concerns as [infection rates rise](#) in the state, particularly given the threat to coal miners' lungs and the fact that COVID-19 can present as a respiratory illness.