



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

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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.

In 2019, Alaska experienced a wildfire season with 720 fires, making it among the biggest fire seasons on record for the state. The damages of the season led to losses of at least \$300 million.

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.

Impacts of climate change

Extreme weather

- In 2019, Alaska experienced a near-historic wildfire season with 720 fires burning nearly 2.5 million acres, the highest number of acres burned of any state for the year. The cost of fighting the 2019 summer wildfires in Alaska is estimated to have exceeded \$300 million.
- The 2019 wildfire conditions were fueled by Alaska's record-breaking heat and dry conditions throughout the summer months.
- Today, Alaska's wildfire season is about 40 percent longer than it was in the 1950s.
- By 2050, Alaska's 100-year coastal floodplain is projected to expand by more than 15,000 square miles. Coastal flooding could disproportionately affect Alaska Natives who comprise the majority of residents in the state's remote coastal villages, some of which are already being forced to alter their ways of life or even relocate their communities.

Temperature

- July 2019 was Alaska's hottest month in recorded history.
- Over the past 60 years, Alaska has warmed more than twice as fast as the rest of the United States, with average temperatures increasing by nearly 3 degrees Fahrenheit. By 2050, temperatures are expected to increase an additional 2 to 4 degrees.

Impacts of the Trump administration's anti-environmental policies

Climate

- 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 Alaska's economy relies heavily on its tourism and outdoor recreation industries, both of which are highly dependent on climate and weather conditions.
 - **Tourism:** In 2017, Alaska's visitor industry accounted for 43,300 jobs and generated an economic impact of \$4.5 billion.
 - **Outdoor recreation:** The outdoor recreation industry in Alaska generates 72,000 direct jobs and more than \$7 billion in consumer spending.

Air quality

- Mercury emissions in Alaska decreased by nearly 32 percent from 2011 to 2017, yet the Trump administration just undermined limits on the amount of mercury and other toxic emissions that are allowed from power plants.

Public lands

- In an effort to fulfill its “energy dominance” agenda, the Trump administration is working to essentially liquidate public lands in Alaska, auctioning off rights to drill in areas that serve as essential wildlife habitats as well as subsistence hunting areas for Alaska Native communities.
 - The administration has proposed eliminating protections from the 9.2 million acres of the largest temperate old-growth forest, Tongass National Forest, and has prepared to auction off drilling rights in the 1.6 million acres of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. Both actions would have disastrous impacts for climate change, potentially turning carbon sinks into sources of carbon.
 - The Izembek National Wildlife Refuge is at risk of losing 417,500 acres due to the administration's proposal to facilitate the construction of a road through the wilderness area.
- In total, the Trump administration has proposed to open 28.3 million acres of land for transfer and leasing sales in Alaska. This degradation of Alaska's natural amenities endangers local economies, such as fishing and outdoor recreation, as well as fuels the climate crisis by selling carbon sinks to industrial interests.