

Unnatural Disaster:

Global Warming and Our National Parks

ACTION CENTER: What we need to do now to protect our national parks for future generations

It is not too late to change course. Significant reductions in greenhouse gas emissions are possible with today's technology and will go a long way toward limiting dangerous climate change. With the centennial of the National Park System less than ten years away, we need to act now to ensure that we have healthy parks for the next century.

TEN STEPS TOWARDS HEALTHY NATIONAL PARKS

1. CAP AND REDUCE POWER PLANT EMISSIONS.

Coal-fired power plants are the largest industrial emitters of carbon dioxide and many other air pollutants that harm the national parks. Their emissions must be capped and significantly reduced in order to protect the parks from global warming, acid rain, unsightly haze, and unhealthy air.

2. INCREASE VEHICLE FUEL EFFICIENCY.

Motor vehicles are among the largest emitters of greenhouse gases. Technologies available today can reduce their emissions, increase their fuel economy, and save consumers money at the gas pumps.

3. PROMOTE CLEAN SOURCES OF ENERGY.

America can meet much of its growing energy needs by simply using more of the energy saving appliances and building practices that have been around for years. We can also deploy more clean renewable energy generating facilities, such as those powered by solar, wind, geothermal technologies.

4. INCREASE FUNDING FOR THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE.

Parks have a tough time responding to the disasters that may become more frequent with climate change — like the 2007 flooding in Mount Rainier National Park that caused an estimated \$36 million in damage and closed the entire park. Congress must ensure NPS has funding to keep up with basic maintenance, be at the forefront of research on the effects of climate change, protect the parks' scenery, ecosystems, history, and recreational values, and educate the public about climate change.

5. EXPAND THE CLIMATE FRIENDLY PARKS PROGRAM.

This innovative NPS program is helping national parks reduce their greenhouse gas emissions, educate visitors about climate change and clean energy solutions, and develop ways to protect natural and cultural resources from the detrimental effects of climate change. Learn more at www.nps.gov/climatefriendlyparks.

6. INNOVATE AT THE STATE AND LOCAL LEVELS.

Effective solutions to global warming are being put in place by cities and states across the country. California developed a program to reduce greenhouse gases from motor vehicles, and a dozen states are following its lead. Mid-Atlantic and New England states are capping carbon dioxide emissions from power plants. The Cities for Climate Protection Campaign is helping local governments reduce their greenhouse gas emissions. The federal government should not stand in the way of these innovative programs, but should instead work to emulate them.

7. HELP NATIONAL PARKS ADAPT TO CLIMATE CHANGE.

Climate change is already altering vital ecosystems protected by our parks. Federal, state, and local authorities must work together to ensure parks stand the greatest chance of surviving these changes with their natural treasures intact. Examples include creating buffers around parks and wildlife corridors between protected lands to give plants and animals room to migrate as their preferred temperature and other environmental conditions shift. Parks can also start to determine whether different varieties of indigenous plants might have a better chance of surviving the changing conditions.

8. ENGAGE WITH THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY.

Global warming is, of course, a global problem, and significant emissions reductions from every nation will be necessary to avoid the worst impacts. The president must engage with our international partners to put in place meaningful and enforceable agreements for reducing greenhouse gases to a safe level.

9. INVEST IN NEW CLIMATE-FRIENDLY TECHNOLOGIES.

Climate change has been described as the biggest challenge facing our nation and our world in a generation. The resources we invest in stopping catastrophic warming should be commensurate with the threat. There are many innovative technologies — such as hydrogen-powered motor vehicles and zero emission power plants — that could play an enormous role in keeping our planet safe. Our elected leaders must ensure that these technologies get off the drawing board into widespread use as quickly as possible.

10. INDIVIDUAL AMERICANS CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE!

Not every solution to climate change takes an act of Congress or a scientific breakthrough. All of us can do things in our everyday lives to reduce pollution and help save our national parks. Buying a new car? Why not consider a hybrid or other high-mileage model. Buying a new appliance? "Energy Star" models will use less energy and save on your electric bills. But you don't have to buy anything to make a difference. Simply driving less, turning off the lights when you don't need them, and recycling can make an enormous difference, especially when we all pitch in. **Find out more about what you can do to help stop global warming and protect our national parks at www.npca.org/globalwarming**