

CLIMATE CHANGE IMPACTS

August 2017

THE SITUATION

Climate change driven by man-made greenhouse gas pollution is causing our air and oceans to warm, glaciers to melt, and sea levels to rise. We are already seeing the effects of climate change today:

 Coastal and island communities threatened with more frequent and severe flooding, and changes to habitats for fish and other species people rely on for their livelihood

 More stress on already imperiled wildlife populations and the landscapes that support them

 Weather patterns changing in ways that worsen storms and droughts

The longer we wait to address the realities of climate change, the worse the impacts will be. In fact, **2016 was the warmest year on record.** The average global temperature in July and August of this year tied for the hottest month since record keeping started in 1880, according to NASA. This August was .29 degrees Fahrenheit warmer than August 2014, previously the warmest August on record.

HOW'D WE GET TO THIS POINT?

Greenhouse gas emissions from electricity generation, industrial activities, agriculture and deforestation, and the transportation sector have contributed to the rapid warming of the Earth's atmosphere. **A failure to curtail these emissions and adapt to the consequences have left our forests, fields, rivers, oceans, and coasts – as well as the people who live and work near them – vulnerable to significant ecological and economic damage.** Congressional Republicans have fought tooth and nail against every Democratic effort to address the climate crisis, voting on numerous occasions to block the Clean Power Plan – the signature domestic climate policy of the Obama administration and a primary target of the Trump administration's regulatory rollback – and have repeatedly rejected legislation and amendments to fight climate change or even acknowledge that it is happening.

WHAT ARE THE IMPACTS TO OUR NATIONAL SECURITY?

As the Department of Defense has recognized, **a changing climate impacts our national security and defense missions,** and they are currently assessing how to best respond to the impacts to resources, operations, and infrastructure necessary for military readiness. In the Arctic Region, for example, where temperatures are rising two times faster than the rest of world on average, the ability to advance U.S. national security interests is directly related to our ability to understand and respond to the challenges of climate change (White House, 2015 Report).

WHAT ARE THE HEALTH IMPACTS?

Climate-altering emissions will have a lasting impact on the health of our communities and families. Those with asthma, heart disease and respiratory illness will be at greater risk of air pollution and prolonged seasonal allergies. Elderly and infant Americans are most vulnerable to recording-breaking heatwaves. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Health and Human Services Department rightly consider climate change to be a public health challenge. But while the health risks might not be as sudden or visible compared to Ebola and the Zika virus, an equal level of attention, concern, and action is necessary.

WHAT ARE THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS?

More extreme weather, drought, fire, and coastal erosion threaten not only people and their communities, but the environment as well. **Warmer air temperatures are already causing these events on land, and warmer ocean temperatures are causing coral bleaching and pressuring fish stocks worldwide.**

WHY SHOULD AMERICANS CARE?

Climate change is disrupting many Americans' way of life, and the impacts will only increase if we do not take decisive action to reduce carbon pollution and adapt to the changes we know will happen. Using the best available science and conservation practices will help lessen the effects of continued emissions on our country's natural resources. Let's implement the most immediate and practical solutions now, rather than waiting and paying a higher price later.

THE FACTS

70% of Americans think global warming is happening, according to a Monmouth University Poll.

<90% of published climate scientists believe climate change is occurring and that human activity is the cause (Environmental Research Letters, 2016).

In 2015, there were **10 weather and climate disaster events with losses exceeding \$1 billion each** across the U.S. These events included a drought event, 2 flooding events, 5 severe storm events, a wildfire event, and a winter storm event (NOAA).

16/17 of the warmest years on record have occurred since 2001 (NASA).

WHAT HAS CONGRESS DONE?

Nothing. House Republicans continue to ignore the broad scientific consensus that human activity is the primary cause of our warming planet. They refuse to acknowledge that climate change is an immediate threat to our communities and have failed to hold a single hearing on global climate change and its impacts on our federal lands and resources. Democrats have sent letters, introduced bills, offered amendments and have invited scientists to testify on the effects of climate change, but House Republicans repeatedly ignore Democratic calls for action.



Democrats want to reduce carbon pollution and help communities and natural resources-dependent industries prepare for changes associated with a warmer world. By following the science we can make smart, proactive decisions that conserve natural resources on land and at sea, protect vulnerable coastal property and infrastructure, and lower the burden on taxpayers.



House Republicans have largely ignored the reality of climate change. They continue to press for expanded production and use of dirty fossil fuels – including coal – and oppose all efforts to control greenhouse gas emissions and adapt to climate-driven phenomena like extreme drought, wildfire and sea level rise. The Trump administration has adopted the Republican climate-denier mentality by rolling back Obama-era environmental policies, pulling out of the Paris climate agreement and attempting to kill Obama's Clean Power Plan.

HOW DO WE MOVE FORWARD?

While a few members have changed their tune, GOP leaders continue to deny climate change and refuse to address it. **Republicans should join Democrats in finding ways to reduce carbon emissions and the impacts of global warming.**