

Climate and Environment

National Report

Donald Trump has referred to climate change as a “hoax” or a “scam”. As a result, his administration has moved aggressively to dismantle environmental and climate protections that have been in place for decades. His actions are delivering profits to billionaires and to large oil, gas, coal and timber corporations at the expense of our environment and our health.

US Environmental Protection Agency: Lee Zeldin, Administrator
US Department of the Interior: Doug Burgum, Secretary
US Department of Energy: Chris Wright, Secretary
US Fish and Wildlife Service: Brian Nesvik, Director

“No species too endangered, no place too sacred, no safeguard too important to sacrifice for profit” (NRDC 9/19/2025)

1) Gutted the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA):

- * The NEPA is a law created in 1969 requiring governmental assessment of pollution sources by industries upon nearby impacted communities and that these communities be notified
- * Federal agencies are now no longer required to assess the impact cumulative pollution on climate, environment or health concerns. Public participation is now limited with decreased review timelines. Scientific analysis is now optional.

2) Reduced greenhouse gas reporting:

- * GHG reporting program requires major polluters to monitor and disclose emissions.
- * Rolling back protections and compliance deadlines regarding methane pollution allows for delay in detection and leak repair with resultant increases in local pollution.

- * Methane is a potent GHG and a major source of smog forming pollution. Though quantitatively less than CO₂ in the atmosphere it has more than 20 times the heat retention capacity.

3) Undermined the Inflation Reduction Act:

- * Enacted by the Biden Administration, the IRA was the largest climate investment in US history.
- * Development of renewable energy infrastructure grants, approved by prior Congress, now being withheld with many small farmers and communities affected.

4) Prioritized profits for fossil fuel and timber industries:

- * Opens public lands and waters to drilling, mining and logging
- * Habitat protections are deregulated.
- * Eliminates permit review for any industrial activities, giving a “free pass” to destroy wildlife habitats (the primary cause of species endangerment and extinction worldwide) and ecosystems.
- * Revives coal plants, granting exemptions from updated mercury and air toxics standards despite their link to cancer and childhood brain damage. New subsidies of \$625 million have been provided to revitalize the industry.

5) Supported Agribusiness over family farms, food safety, and public and environmental health

- * Implemented Cancer Gag Act which shields pesticide companies from legal action.
- * The EPA is divested of any authority to regulate pesticide pollution.
- * The pesticide industry can veto endangered species protections despite bee and butterfly populations collapsing due to pesticide use.
- * State animal welfare laws are overridden
- * Corporate agriculture is given controlling rights over policies affecting food supply without inclusion of health or safety concerns.
- * Re-authorized use of glyphosate, a toxic herbicide which can decimate pollinators and contaminate soils affecting the health of both wildlife and human populations.

- 6) Disengaged the United States from global communities, treaties, and commitments including the Paris Agreement, undermining the critical need to address climate change and its damaging consequences. The leading role is now being assumed by China.
- 7) Disempowered the Toxic Substance Control Act:
 - * The TSCA set safety standards for “forever chemicals” used in products like cleaning supplies, toys, furniture, buildings, and clothing.
 - * These chemicals (PFAs) are man-made synthetic chemicals that are toxic even in extremely low levels and pose significant risk to environmental and human health.
 - * Synthetic chemicals resist breakdown, are difficult to contain as they disperse quickly, contaminate the environment during production, and when washed or thrown away they leach into the environment for further dispersal.
 - * Manufacturers do not need to disclose their presence in products exposing consumers to their potential health risks.
 - * To date 50 companies have been given exemption status for the next two years.
 - * Any product protection is now up to individual states.
- 8) Dismantled Disaster Preparedness and Relief:
 - * Cut funding, driving up insurance costs
 - * Laid off hurricane hunters, flood gauge operators, wildfire prevention staff.
 - * Degraded weather forecasting
 - * Reduced HUD disaster recovery staff by 30%
 - * Weakened FEMA. Two-thirds of the calls now go unanswered.
 - * Froze, delayed or denied disaster aid to 13 states, many involving black and brown communities, the hardest hit.
 - * Ended the NASA orbiting Carbon Observatory. It’s mission was not only devised to monitor CO2 atmospheric levels but also for storm warning for disaster preparedness, agriculture, food security and energy planning. This program capability was unmatched by any other nation.

10) Weakened the Marine Mammal Protection Act:

- * The MMPA was enacted in 1972 to protect whales, dolphins, manatees, sea otters and polar bears. Under this protection no species has been lost.
- * It prohibits harassment, hunting, capturing or killing any of the protected species.
- * It requires regular monitoring and only sustainable harvesting. Only Alaskan natives are allowed unregulated harvesting.
- * It sets standards re allowable capture for import
- * It requires periodic update and reauthorization by Congress: Recent updates have downgraded manatees to survival numbers, weakened standards re activities that may injure or kill (like drilling and mining) and undermined the limits set to protect sea life from inadvertent death by commercial fisheries. Safeguarding sea-life and ecosystems are secondary to industrial and commercial enterprise.
- * Deep sea mining: To extract nickel, cobalt and manganese from the sea floor requires massive machinery to vacuum up the seabed, bulldozing a fragile ecosystem. Deep oceans store vast amounts of carbon which if disrupted will be released as well as diminish further absorption capabilities. They are a critical component of Earth's climate regulating system.
- * Off-shore drilling has been ongoing for more than 100 years with 55,000 wells drilled in the last 80. 1,500 wells stand unused continuing to deteriorate, release gases, and leak oil. The Deepwater Horizon disaster in the Gulf of Mexico killed 11 workers and spilled 210 million gallons of oil that polluted beaches and suffocated wildlife. Kaskida, BP's newest deepwater project, has been approved for the Gulf pending approval to allow possible extinction of the Rice Whale, a year-round resident of the Gulf whose count is currently at 51. Even without blowouts these wells release pollution into the air and sea.

11) Rescinded the Roadless Area Conservation Rule:

- * The "Roadless Rule" was enacted in 2001 and was one of the

nation's fundamental conservation policies.

- * It protects nearly 58 million acres of national forest, 30% of which is in the National Forest System and accounts for 2% of the entire continental US land area.
- * These areas are some of the most ecologically valuable public lands and intact wildlife systems and were thus protected from road building and industrial logging.
- * Allowing new roads results in fragmented habitats, degraded streams, increasing fire risk, soil erosion, loss of wildlife and water filtration.

12) Rescinded the EPA's Endangerment Finding:

- * Established in 2009, the Endangerment Finding was a scientific determination that greenhouse gases were endangering human health and welfare. It is the legal basis for regulating climate pollution under the Clean Air Act which sets limits on carbon pollution from vehicles, power plants and industries.
- * Declassifies CO2 and five other greenhouse gases as public health threats, and eliminates all emission standards.
- * Coal plants, chemical manufacturers, coke ovens, etc. have been exempted from clean air rules.
- * There are no protections from toxic pollutants such as mercury and ethylene oxide
- * Vehicle emission standards have been repealed initially with provisions to expand to include emissions from power plants, buildings, and other forms of transportation.

13) Dismantled the National Center of Atmospheric Research:

- * NCAR is the leading US climate and weather research institution It forecasts extreme weather and helps to gain a greater understanding of climate events and to prepare for them. It is funded by taxpayers to serve the public.
- * Its dismantlement, parts and assets are being transferred to private enterprises.

14) Rescinded the Conservation and Landscape Health Rule:

- * The Public Lands Rule was established in 2024 and designed to ensure that public lands were managed not only for extraction,

but also for the health of ecosystems, wildlife, and future generations.

- * 640-650 million acres of land are under the management of the federal government, ie. approximately 29% of our surface area. The vast majority of this land is in 14 Western states and under the management of four agencies who determine who gets access, how it is managed and what values guide those decisions:

- Bureau of Land Management- 245 million acres

- Forest Service- 193 million acres

- Fish and Wildlife Service- 89 million acres

- National Parks Service- 80 million acres

- * Under the BLM the land has been predominantly dominated by industrial use, ie grazing, mining, logging, and drilling. This has resulted in fragmented habitats and species endangerment.
- * The Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 required that the BLM legally manage multiple uses with sustained yield, including fishing and wildlife and ecological integrity.
- * Only 14% of this land is currently under conservation protections with the rest at risk for exploitation.
- * 18 million acres of the Western Arctic in Alaska have been opened to gas and oil development, including the entire coastal plains of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.
This is the largest intact tract of public land with 23 million acres of diverse habitats. It is a globally significant ecosystem with countless species and home to indigenous communities who have been stewards to this land for generations.
It plays a critical role in climate stabilization as it stores vast amounts of carbon in its permafrost and reflects solar heat with its sea ice.
Alaska's Arctic is warming 4 times faster than other global areas and expansion of oil extraction can only worsen the climate crisis and harm critically important public lands and its wildlife.
- * 13.1 million acres approved for the coal extraction.
50 million acres opened for timber harvest.

15) Weakened The Endangered Species Act:

- * Enacted in 1978, the ESA has been the most effective law

protecting at-risk species from extinction. 300 species are currently listed as endangered and 2,400 listed as threatened or “at-risk”. Under the safeguard of the ESA, 99% of all listed species have continued to survive.

Allows citizens and organizations to petition to have a species listed as threatened or endangered. Scientific evaluation and public review are done prior to a decision being finalized.

Listed species have critical habitat protections as well as development and recovery implementation, which must be in coordination with federal, state, tribal and local agencies.

- * Doug Burgum, Secretary of Dept. of the Interior, has called for the Endangered Species Committee to meet to approve the extinction of the critically endangered Rice Whale (only 51) as well as likely killing of endangered sperm whales and sea turtles in the Gulf of Mexico in order to fast track approval for BP Oil to begin deep sea drilling.

The last time this committee met was 36 years ago and legally can be called only under specific rules which have not been met. Despite it’s illegality the meeting was held in secret without public review and authorized approval

- * The ESA Amendment Act, HR 1897 under congressional review, is a massive attempt to eviscerate all safeguards and protections for at-risk species and eco-habitats. Scientific and public review is diminished in order to prioritize energy, agriculture and infrastructure. Greater authority is granted states and localities which potentially creates inconsistencies and conflict for wildlife that cross territorial boundaries. The term “harm”, which underpins many safeguards, is being redefined to permit greater laxity for industrial activities. At-risk and endangered listed species can be downgraded or sacrificed for economic profit.

16) Ended Environment Justice:

- * All Environment Justice Grant Programs have been terminated. All EPA Environmental Offices have been closed.
- * According to Lee Zeldin (EPA Administrator) environmental justice is “radical” and “wasteful” and a form of “reverse discrimination”.

Low-income and predominantly black and brown communities that bear the disproportionate burden of pollution and climate risk are denied redress.

17) Dismantled National Park Service:

- * The National Park Service began with president Teddy Roosevelt's vision. When he was inaugurated in 1901 there were only a handful of park sites; but, during his administration, he laid the foundation for what would become the NPS. He established 5 National Parks, 18 National Monuments and over 200 forests and preserves. Today the NPS manages 433 sites across the country.
- * Trump's Big Beautiful Bill initially proposed massive liquidation of public lands with a transfer of management to states. This would have result in defunding some 350 national parks which could include National Heritage Sites, like Niagara Falls and Civil War battlefields. Many states, however, are not equipped with resources to assume this management and which could have result in their "sell-off" and privatization. The public outcry resulted in this proposal's removal from the approved bill.
- * A park staffing crisis has been created due to a 24% cut (some 4000 people) by DOGE, forced buyouts and hiring freeze. Lost staff included wildlife certified personnel, forest rangers, scientists and public land experts. This has resulted in a loss of services: closure of ranger stations, campgrounds, and access to lakes and restrooms, loss of educated guided tours, delayed emergency services, and lack of facilities and trail maintenance. Staff for timber, mining and law-enforcement has been prioritized and enhanced.
- * The Bureau of Land Management Budget was cut by \$4 billion with subsequent budget cuts to the National Park Service, to the US Forest Service, and to US Fish and Wildlife. The recreational budgets were also cut by \$45 million (62%). The park service had an 85% cut which resulted in staff reduction from 209 to 32. The forest service had a similar impact despite the fact the national forests generates more money from recreation than from logging.

- * The Public Lands Rule that prioritized conservation with development has been eliminated. Industrial expansion is prioritized, allowing fossil fuel extraction, mining and logging. The “mine everywhere” executive order prioritized mining as a primary use for public lands and allows fast tracking of permits. Restrictions on coal leasing were terminated and 13 million acres were opened for coal mining. Oil and gas sales in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge mandated.
- * The executive order “Making America Beautiful Again” “by improving our national parks” aims to improve revenue by charging an additional \$1 entry fee to all non-residents at 11 of the top parks with an additional increased cost of an annual pass to \$250 for non-citizens. The revenue generated is to be used to improve infrastructure. Entry to parks will prioritize citizens over non-citizens.
All educational materials regarding climate, slavery, indigenous people, our national history or LGBTQ+ must be removed or altered to align with Trump ideology.
- * A “Make America Beautiful Again” commission has been formed with the intention to drive conservative policy, cut red tape and expand access for hunting, fishing and off-roading.
- * Free days have been changed from Martin Luther King Jr. Day and Juneteenth to “patriotic” dates like Veteran’s Day and Trump’s birthday.
- * Under the pretext of “wildfire management” the Roadless Rule has been repealed, thus removing protections on over 45 million acres of national forest. By executive order 100 million acres of forest have been opened for timber harvest.
- * The office headquarters for Land Management services has been moved to Utah from Washington DC.
- * Plans to sell public lands for housing has been initiated threatening privatization.