The Impacts of Climate Change and the Trump Administration’s Anti-Environmental Agenda in Florida

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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.

Between 2017 and 2019, Florida experienced three tropical cyclones, three severe storms, and one freeze. The damages of each event led to losses of at least $1 billion.

Impacts of climate change

Extreme weather

• Due to sea level rise and the risk of Atlantic hurricanes, Florida faces the highest risk for coastal flooding in the United States. Currently, 3.5 million Floridians are at risk of coastal flooding, and by 2050, an additional 1.1 million residents will be at risk.

• Hurricane Irma, which struck in September 2017, led to the evacuation of more than 6 million people in Florida—more than a quarter of residents. Parts of the state experienced up to 20 inches of rain and sustained Category 3 winds of 111 mph to 115 mph. The storm damaged half of Miami-Dade County’s agricultural crops, leading to losses of $245 million.

• Florida’s sea level has risen 8 inches since 1950, and forecasts project that by 2032, the sea level will have risen another 6 inches. Florida is preparing to spend more than $4 billion on solutions for sea level rise.

Temperature

• Currently, Florida experiences roughly 25 days of dangerous heat per year. Projections indicate that by 2050 that number will increase more than fivefold to 130 such days each year, more than any other state. This is dangerous for the 620,000 Florida residents who are especially vulnerable to extreme heat.
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 Floridians $1.8 billion annually.

• 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 Florida’s economy relies heavily on its tourism, agriculture, and outdoor industries—all of which are highly dependent on climate and weather conditions.

  • **Tourism:** Florida’s tourism industry contributed $85.9 billion to the state’s economy and supported 1.5 million jobs in 2017.

  • **Agriculture:** Florida is the second-largest supplier of vegetables in the United States. In 2014, the agricultural industry supplied nearly 14 percent of all jobs in the state and contributed $127.3 billion to the state’s economy.

  • **Outdoor recreation:** The outdoor recreation industry in Florida generates 485,000 direct jobs and more than $58 billion in consumer spending.

Air quality
• Mercury emissions in Florida decreased by nearly 77 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.