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

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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, Wyoming experienced three severe storms and two wildfires. The damages of each event led to losses of at least $1 billion.

Impacts of climate change

Extreme weather

• From 1970 to 2015, Wyoming has seen the fifth-highest increase in the number of large fires on national forestlands of any state in the Southwest.

• By 2050, Wyoming is expected to see eight more high wildfire-potential days, the ninth-highest increase among Southwestern states.

• More than 450,000 Wyoming residents, or 82 percent of the state’s population, live in areas at an elevated risk of wildfire.

• Fourteen percent of properties in Wyoming are at high to extreme wildfire risk.

• In 2019, 486 wildfires burned 41,857 acres in Wyoming.

• By 2050, Wyoming is projected to see a 40 percent increase in its index of the severity of widespread drought. This could lead to an increase in the risk of multiyear droughts in the state.

Temperature

• Wyoming currently experiences 10 heatwave days per year, but projections indicate that number will increase fivefold to 50 days per year by 2050. This endangers the lives of the more than 10,000 people in Wyoming 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 Wyoming residents $65 million 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 Wyoming’s economy relies heavily on its agriculture, tourism, and outdoor recreation industries—all of which are highly dependent on climate and weather conditions.
  - **Agriculture:** In 2014, agriculture in Wyoming supported 33,000 direct jobs and more than $4 billion in total value-added impact to the state.
  - **Tourism:** In 2018, travel spending by visitors in Wyoming exceeded $3.8 billion. The leisure and hospitality industry directly supported nearly 33,000 jobs, making it the largest private-sector employer in the state.
  - **Outdoor recreation:** The outdoor recreation industry in Wyoming generates 50,000 direct jobs and more than $5 billion in consumer spending.

Air quality

- Mercury emissions in Wyoming decreased by nearly 58 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.

Water quality

- In 2019, the Trump administration released a series of proposed changes loosening regulations of coal-powered plants and the disposal of coal ash, which can threaten drinking water quality. These deregulations are dangerous for Wyoming, where 2.1 million tons of coal ash are generated annually. A 2019 report found that two Wyoming power plants were the third and fourth most contaminated facilities in the United States.