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

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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, Arkansas experienced six severe storms and three floods. The damages of these events led to losses of at least $1 billion.

Impacts of climate change

Extreme weather

• In 2019, Arkansas witnessed record-breaking flooding when the Arkansas River rose by more than 40 feet across three states, including Arkansas, and resulted in $3.1 billion in damages.

• Arkansas is ranked as a top 10 state for the highest number of flood insurance payouts.

• The number of summer droughts in the state is projected to double by 2050.

• Arkansas faces one of the highest threats for inland flooding—with 210,000 people in the state at risk—yet is one of the least prepared states against the threat.

• Hot Springs National Park in Arkansas is ranked third among national parks that will face the biggest increase in the annual average number of days hotter than 100 degrees Fahrenheit. The average will go up to 71 days per year by 2100, or 65 more days than 1991 to 2010 levels.

• Arkansas averages more than 1,000 wildfires annually, and more than 1.3 million Arkansans live at an elevated risk of wildfires.

Temperature

• Arkansas currently averages 18 days per year when heat exceeds dangerous levels, but projections indicate that number will more than triple to 63 days per year by
2050. This endangers the lives of the more than 100,000 people in Arkansas who are especially vulnerable to extreme heat.

• Projections indicate that Arkansas' climate will resemble that of **Pharr, Texas, by 2100.**

• By 2100, summers in Little Rock, Arkansas, will be **9.46 degrees Fahrenheit** hotter than 2014 summer temperatures.

• Fayetteville, Arkansas, has seen a **16-day increase** in the annual average number of days ideal for mosquito season since 1980, increasing the threat of mosquito-related viruses.

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**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 Arkansans more than **$230 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 Arkansas's economy relies heavily on its tourism and outdoor recreation industries, both of which are highly dependent on climate and weather conditions.

  • **Tourism:** In 2018, the Arkansas visitor industry accounted for **68,000 jobs** and generated an economic impact of **$570 million** in state and local tax revenues.

  • **Outdoor recreation:** The outdoor recreation industry in Arkansas generates **96,000 direct jobs** and more than **$9.7 billion** in consumer spending.

  • **Agriculture:** Arkansas’ agriculture industry contributes **$16 billion** in state revenue annually and supports **49,346 farmers.** Arkansas is the **leading** producer of rice in the United States, growing roughly **50 percent** of the nation’s rice.

**Air quality**

• Mercury emissions in Arkansas decreased by more than **88 percent** from 2011 to 2017, yet the Trump administration just undermined limits on the amount of mercury and other toxic emissions 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 Arkansas, where four of the state’s five coal-fired electrical plants are considered to have **dangerously high levels of pollutants.**