



# The Impacts of Climate Change and the Trump Administration's Anti-Environmental Agenda in Puerto Rico

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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 and Puerto Rico.

To read the personal stories of Americans impacted by climate change and the effects of the Trump administration's anti-environmental policies in your state, visit [OurEnvironment.org](https://OurEnvironment.org).



For citations, please see the web version of this fact sheet.

Between 2017 and 2019, Puerto Rico experienced three tropical cyclones. The damages of these events led to losses of at least \$1 billion.

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## Impacts of climate change

### Extreme weather

- In September 2017, Hurricane Irma, the most powerful Atlantic storm on record, hit Puerto Rico.
  - Despite not making landfall on the island, the storm downed powerlines and caused flooding, leaving more than 1 million people without power and more than 56,000 people without potable water.
- Two weeks after Hurricane Irma struck Puerto Rico, Hurricane Maria, a Category 4 storm, made landfall in September 2017 with 175 mph winds.
  - The storm was the third-costliest natural disaster in U.S. history, and Puerto Rico estimates that it will cost \$139 billion to fully recover.
  - One estimate placed the death toll at 2,975 deaths. More than 80 percent of the island's power lines were knocked down by the storm, leaving 3.4 million residents in the dark. It took 11 months for power to be restored to the island.
- Projections indicate that by 2060, the sea level around Puerto Rico will rise by 22 inches.

## Temperature

- Since 1950, temperatures in Puerto Rico have increased by roughly 1.5 degrees Fahrenheit.
- Puerto Rico is projected to warm faster than the global average, with increases in both mean and extreme temperatures, including days per year hotter than 95 degrees Fahrenheit and nights warmer than 85 degrees Fahrenheit.
- Global climate models project an increase in average temperatures of roughly 1.5 degrees to 4 degrees Fahrenheit across the region by 2050.

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## Impacts of the Trump administration's anti-environmental policies

### Climate

- 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 Puerto Rico’s economy relies heavily on agriculture and tourism, both of which are highly dependent on climate and weather conditions.
  - **Agriculture:** Agriculture in Puerto Rico accounts for only 3 percent of the labor force and less than 1 percent of the gross domestic product, but Hurricane Maria is still estimated to have damaged \$2 billions' worth of agriculture.
  - **Tourism:** In 2017, the tourism industry in Puerto Rico accounted for a total economic impact of \$7.8 billion and supported a total of 83,000 jobs.

### Air quality

- Mercury emissions in Puerto Rico decreased by nearly 11 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.

### Toxics

- In 2020, President Donald Trump proposed cutting the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s budget by more than one-quarter and the Superfund program by more than \$100 million. Puerto Rico has 25 Superfund sites, and in the wake of Hurricane Maria, many of these sites were affected by flooding and other damages that caused them to leak into the surrounding groundwater and pollute waterways. After Hurricane Maria, water was pulled from the Dorado Groundwater Contamination Site, a registered Superfund site. Exposure to contamination from toxic sites can lead to adverse health effects including cancer and birth defects, and Puerto Rico has confirmed multiple deaths linked to waterborne illness since the hurricane.