



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

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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.

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, West Virginia experienced three severe storms. The damages of these events led to losses of at least [\\$1 billion](#).

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## Impacts of climate change

### Extreme weather

- In 2018, West Virginia saw the wettest year on record with [96.99 inches](#) of precipitation.
- In 2019, [593 wildfires](#) burned [7,653 acres](#) in West Virginia.

### Temperature

- West Virginia currently averages [2 days](#) per year when heat exceeds dangerous levels, but projections indicate that number will increase more than tenfold to [24 days](#) per year by 2050. This endangers the lives of the more than [60,000](#) people in West Virginia who are especially vulnerable to extreme heat.
- West Virginia's mosquito breeding season has increased from an average of [77 days](#) per year between 1980 and 1989 to [108 days](#) per year from 2006 to the present.
- By 2100, summers in West Virginia will be [11.1 degrees Fahrenheit](#) hotter than 2014 temperatures, comparable to those of present-day Cedar Park, Texas.

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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 West Virginia residents [\\$162 million](#) annually. A 2018 report indicates that West Virginia has seen minor improvements in air quality, yet the state continues to be [plagued by the effects of ozone smog](#).
- 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 West Virginia’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 2018, [3.62 million acres](#) of West Virginia farmland generated [\\$560 million](#) worth of crops and livestock.
  - **Tourism:** In 2017, direct visitor spending in West Virginia generated nearly [\\$4.5 billion](#) and supported [45,000 West Virginian jobs](#).
  - **Outdoor recreation:** The outdoor recreation industry in West Virginia generates [91,000](#) direct jobs and more than [\\$9 billion](#) in consumer spending.

### Air quality

- Mercury emissions in West Virginia decreased by nearly [75 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 West Virginia, which is home to the [largest coal ash waste site](#) in the country containing more than [960 acres](#) of waste.

### Coal

- Coal company executives, particularly Bob Murray of Murray Energy, have [requested and advocated for rollbacks](#) of more than 15 different environmental rules and protections. These rollbacks include actions such as withdrawing from the Paris climate agreement, repealing and replacing the Clean Power Plan, and slashing the EPA’s budget and staff numbers.
  - Although West Virginia ranked [second](#) among top coal-producing states in 2018, the overall number of coal mines in West Virginia is [declining](#).

- Coal company executives, the Trump administration, and the administration's allies in Congress have left retired coal miners out to dry [by refusing](#) to fully and permanently fund their pensions and provide them with health care options. West Virginia's Sen. Joe Manchin (D) has tweeted at President Donald Trump daily requesting that he adequately care for retired miners to no avail.
- The continued operation of coal mines during the COVID-19 pandemic presents increased health concerns as [infection rates rise](#) in the state, particularly given the threat to coal miners' lungs and the fact that COVID-19 can present as a respiratory illness.