The Impacts of Climate Change and the Trump Administration’s Anti-Environmental Agenda in Washington, D.C.

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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.

Impacts of climate change

Extreme weather
• On July 8, 2019, a month’s worth of rain—4 inches—was unleashed over just one hour in Washington, D.C. The flood was one of the most extreme weather events in years and required the National Weather Service to activate its first-ever flash flood emergency for the district. The event was likely intensified by climate change-induced rising temperatures.
• The relative sea-level rise of the rivers around Washington, D.C., is projected to increase 1.2 feet by 2050 and 4 feet by 2100.
• In Washington, D.C., 1,350 acres of land lie less than 6 feet above the high tide line. This area includes $4.6 billion in property value and contains more than 1,400 people in 400 homes.
• On average, Washington, D.C., currently experiences five additional mosquito “disease danger days” per year than it did in the 1970s.
• The National Mall sits in the 100-year flood plain, and the entire Tidal Basin is slowly sinking. Parts of the Tidal Basin flood twice per day at high tide, indicating that the reservoir cannot handle the increasing number of flooding events and rising sea level associated with climate change.
Temperature

- By 2080, temperatures in Washington, D.C., will increase by 6.4 degrees Fahrenheit, resembling current temperatures in Greenwood, Mississippi.
- 2011 to 2019 was the warmest decade on record in Washington, D.C.

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 the economy of Washington, D.C., and the surrounding region relies heavily on national park revenue, which is highly dependent on climate and weather conditions.
  - Tourism: A 2015 National Park Service report shows that spending by more than 56 million visitors to national parks in the National Capital Region resulted in 16,917 jobs and contributed almost $1.6 billion to the region’s economy.

Air quality

- Since 2017, the Trump administration has reversed or is in the process of reversing 27 air pollution and emission regulations. This is especially concerning because a 2020 American Lung Association report ranked Washington, D.C., Maryland, and Virginia as 20th in the country for placing residents most at risk for dangerous side effects from ozone pollution.

Water quality

- The Trump administration has proposed cutting the Chesapeake Bay Program’s funding by 91 percent in the 2021 budget. This is concerning because the health of the bay is in jeopardy. From 2017 to 2018, the Chesapeake Bay’s health score declined from 54 percent to 46 percent. Washington, D.C., sits within the Chesapeake Bay watershed, and the district’s rivers flow into the bay.
- Since 2019, the Trump administration has been in the process of weakening legislation regarding lead pipes. The proposed legislation gives companies twice as much time to remove lead pipes in systems testing for high lead levels. This is especially concerning in Washington, D.C., because the U.S. Department of Energy and Environment is still replacing lead pipes within the city.