

Obama Administration Record on the Environment

“Our attitude is if you take something out of the Earth, you have a responsibility to give a little bit back to the Earth. So these are the right steps to take for our environment. But they’re also the right steps to take for our country. They help spur the economy. They create jobs by putting more Americans back to work in tourism and recreation. They help inspire a new generation of scientists to learn how the world works. They help Americans stay healthier by making it easier to spend time outside.”

-President Barack Obama, February 16, 2011

Since taking office, President Obama has fought to protect the air we breathe, water we drink, and land that supports and sustains us. From saving lives by cleaning up air pollution to restoring ecosystems including the Chesapeake Bay and the Everglades, the Obama Administration is tackling our nation’s environmental challenges. The Obama Administration’s record supporting a healthier environment includes:

Improving Public Health by Limiting Harmful Pollution

- **Cleaning Up Air Pollution:** The Obama Administration has issued landmark clean air standards that will protect the health of American families and save lives by cleaning up air pollution in communities across the country. The Administration has established first-ever national limits for mercury, arsenic, and other toxic air pollution from power plants; put in place a program that will slash smog and soot-forming pollution from power plants that cross state lines and create health problems in downwind areas; and taken common-sense steps to limit mercury and other pollutants for the largest sources of industrial air pollution, including cement plants, industrial boilers, and waste incinerators. These long overdue actions will provide enormous public health benefits: each year, they will avert tens of thousands of premature deaths, prevent tens of thousands of heart attacks and hospital visits, and alleviate hundreds of thousands of childhood asthma attacks. The Administration has also proposed the first national standard for carbon pollution from new power plants under the Clean Air Act, which will ensure that the next generation of power plants employ widely available, American-made technologies to produce electricity more cleanly and efficiently.
- **Curbing Vehicle Pollution:** The Obama Administration has proposed historic fuel economy standards that will nearly double the fuel efficiency of cars and light trucks by 2025, saving consumers \$1.7 trillion at the pump and eliminating 6 billion metric tons of carbon pollution. The Administration has also finalized the first-ever national fuel economy and greenhouse gas emission standards for commercial trucks, vans, and buses built in 2014-2018, which are projected to save more than 500 million barrels of oil and an estimated \$50 billion in fuel costs.
- **Reducing Global Emissions of Mercury:** The Obama Administration played a leading role in crafting an agreement among more than 140 nations to negotiate a legally binding treaty to reduce mercury emissions globally, which is scheduled to be finalized in 2013. The Administration’s actions to reduce toxic mercury pollution in the United States -

including establishing the first-ever mercury standards for power plants – give us additional credibility to lead in this global effort to improve public health.

- **Delivering on the President’s Commitment to Clean Water:** The Obama Administration has taken comprehensive action to ensure the integrity of the waters Americans rely on for drinking, swimming, and fishing, and that support farming, recreation, tourism, and economic growth. The Administration has taken steps to clarify which waters are protected by the Clean Water Act nationwide; launched innovative partnerships and programs to improve water quality and water efficiency; created initiatives to revitalize communities by restoring rivers and critical watersheds; and taken steps to reduce the environmental impacts of mountaintop coal mining. The Administration has also begun a process to develop the first-ever national standard for perchlorate to reduce the risk posed by chemicals in drinking water. And the Administration has proposed to modernize the guidelines that govern Federal water resource planning, calling for water resources projects based on sound science, improved transparency, and consideration of the variety of community benefits of projects.

Strengthening Environmental Protection

- **Renewing the Federal Commitment to Our Nation’s Ecosystems:** After decades of steep and steady decline of many of America’s valuable ecosystems, the Obama Administration is giving priority attention to the California Bay Delta, reversing the longstanding decline of the Gulf of Mexico, making long-overdue progress on projects to restore the Everglades, improving Chesapeake Bay protection and restoration, and making the most significant investment in Great Lakes restoration in history.
- **Protecting our Oceans and Coasts:** America’s coastal regions and waters support tens of millions of jobs and contribute trillions of dollars to the national economy each year. That’s why President Obama established the first comprehensive National Ocean Policy to ensure the protection, maintenance, and restoration of our ocean, coasts, and Great Lakes ecosystems. With over half of the American population living within 50 miles of the coast, the Administration is working together with states, tribes, and local leaders to enhance the sustainability of ocean and coastal economies.
- **Protecting America’s Landscapes:** President Obama has led the most extensive expansion of land and water conservation in more than a generation, fighting to protect our Nation’s natural heritage and the places Americans swim, fish, hunt, hike, and spend time outdoors. The President signed legislation that designated millions of acres of Federal land as wilderness, protected more than 1,000 miles of rivers, authorized the 26 million-acre National Landscape Conservation System, and designated thousands of miles of trails for the National Trails System. The Administration has also taken action to protect tens of millions of acres of roadless areas across the country. President Obama used his authority under the Antiquities Act to designate Fort Monroe in Hampton, Virginia, and Fort Ord on California’s Central Coast as National Monuments, establishing permanent protection for these important sites. The President also created

the America's Great Outdoors Initiative to work with the American people to develop a community-led conservation and recreation agenda for the 21st century.

- **Making Historic Investments in Environmental Protection:** The Obama Administration has made unprecedented investments in programs and projects that protect and restore the environment while creating green jobs. The Environmental Protection Agency and the Departments of the Interior and Agriculture alone oversaw nearly \$12 billion in Recovery Act funding for projects that vary from green job training and trail maintenance to habitat restoration and water quality improvements.

Building Healthier Communities and a Greener Federal Government

- **Leading By Example – Creating a More Sustainable Federal Government:** President Obama has set sustainability goals across the Federal government to increase energy efficiency, reduce oil consumption, conserve water, reduce waste, support sustainable communities, plan for climate change adaptation, and leverage Federal purchasing power to promote environmentally-responsible products and technologies.
- **Recommitting to Environmental Justice:** The Obama Administration is committed to ensuring that communities overburdened by pollution – particularly minority, low-income, and indigenous communities – have the opportunity to enjoy the health and economic benefits of a clean environment. After more than a decade of inaction, the Administration reconvened the Environmental Justice Interagency Working Group and engaged more than 100 environmental justice leaders at a White House forum. Federal agencies signed a Memorandum of Understanding on environmental justice and released strategies for integrating environmental justice into Federal decision-making and programs in areas such as transportation, labor, health services, and housing.
- **Investing in Sustainable Communities:** The Obama Administration created the historic Partnership for Sustainable Communities to break down traditional silos among the Federal agencies for housing, transportation, and environmental protection. By coordinating investment and aligning policies, the Partnership is supporting sustainable communities – places that provide homes working families can afford, jobs and services close to where people live, transportation options that reduce air pollution, and vibrant and healthy neighborhoods that attract economic activity. Through 2011, the Partnership had announced more than \$1.7 billion in grants and other assistance for projects focused on livability in more than 550 communities and regions across the country.

Addressing Climate Change

- **Reducing Emissions through Investments and Standards:** The Administration has made the largest clean energy investment in American history, putting the U.S. on track to double renewable power generation between 2008 and the end of 2012. The

Administration has also proposed the first Clean Air Act standard for limiting carbon pollution from new power plants.

- **Monitoring Emissions:** Under the Obama Administration, the United States is comprehensively cataloguing greenhouse gas emissions from the largest sources for the first time – an important initial step toward measurable and transparent reductions in carbon pollution to protect the health and welfare of the American people. The Administration launched an online tool that makes comprehensive greenhouse gas emission data publicly available for 29 different industrial categories and other large sources of carbon pollution. President Obama has also directed the Federal Government – the largest energy consumer in the U.S. economy – to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions from direct sources, such as building energy use and fuel consumption by 28 percent by 2020, and from indirect sources, such as those from employee commuting, by 13 percent by 2020. In 2011, the Administration released the first-ever comprehensive Greenhouse Gas Emissions Inventory for the U.S. Government, allowing agencies to leverage data to gauge the effectiveness of their renewable energy investments and energy and fuel efficiency efforts.
- **Adapting to Climate Change:** Under the Obama Administration, Federal agencies are drafting their first-ever climate change adaptation plans to help ensure smart decisions that protect taxpayer investments and safeguard the health and safety of communities, economies, and infrastructure from the impacts of severe weather, rising sea levels, and other changing climate conditions. The Administration has also developed national adaptation strategies to protect freshwater resources and fish, wildlife, and plants.
- **Advancing Climate Change Science and Education:** Through the U.S. Global Change Research Program (USGCRP), U.S. government scientists are conducting world-class research on global climate change. The USGCRP is a collaborative effort involving 13 Federal agencies to evaluate the current and future impacts of climate change, inform policy-makers and the public about scientific findings, and investigate effective ways to reduce carbon pollution and deploy cost-effective clean energy technology.
- **Leading Internationally:** Under the Obama Administration, the United States has engaged the international community to promote sustainable economic growth and address climate change through a number of important venues, including through international climate negotiations, a Major Economies Forum on Energy and Climate launched by the Administration, and the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Summit, among others.