

The Clean Power Plan

Across the United States and around the world, climate change poses an increasingly dire threat to wildlife, communities, and public health. Changes to our climate are destroying critical wildlife habitat, causing habitat ranges to shift, increasing incidence of pests and invasive species, decreasing available food and water, changing the chemistry of the ocean, and increasing the rate of species' extinction.¹

On June 2nd, 2014 the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) proposed the Clean Power Plan (CPP), which sets first ever limits on carbon pollution from existing power plants. Power plants are the U.S.'s largest source of carbon pollution accounting for 40% of total climate-change-driving emissions in the United States and reducing their emissions is a critical first step to bring climate change under control. EPA is expected to finalize the rule by late summer 2015.

The Clean Air Act gives the EPA the authority to regulate pollutants, such as carbon dioxide, from power plants in order to protect public health and welfare. Right now we limit mercury, arsenic, lead, smog and soot from power plants but not carbon pollution – the key driver of climate change. These carbon pollution limits will help sustain our outdoor heritage, conserve wildlife habitat, protect our clean air and water, and create thousands of clean energy jobs.



Bull elk are impacted by the heat stress and drought that come with a changing climate (photo: USFWS)

How the Clean Power Plan Works

The CPP is the most significant step in our nation's history to protect America's communities and wildlife from the impacts of climate change. The science-based pollution limits are achievable and build upon the proven successes of numerous leading states.

The CPP establishes pollution targets for each state, based on their particular fuel mix, emissions-reduction potential, and 2012 baseline. In order to meet these reduction targets, EPA created a "best system of emission reduction", comprised of four flexible building blocks:

1. Make existing coal plants more efficient
2. Increase use of existing natural gas plants
3. Increase use of low and zero-carbon renewable energy sources
4. Increase energy efficiency measures to reduce overall demand for energy

¹ IPCC. 2013. *Summary for policymakers. In: Climate Change 2013: The Physical Science Basis. Contribution of Working Group I to the Fifth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.* Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK and New York, NY.



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States must design and submit their own State Implementation Plans to meet the targets laid out by EPA by June 2016. The CPP also includes the option for states to work together to achieve their targets. Right now the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI), which is a systems-wide approach to reducing carbon pollution in the Northeast region's power sector, provides a good example. The states that participate in RGGI have already seen huge successes: since RGGI began, emissions have decreased over 30% in the region while electricity prices remain lower than before RGGI took effect and their regional economy has grown by 7%.²

The proposed rule will achieve a 30% reduction in emissions by 2030, but additional reductions are achievable through increased reliance on clean energy.³ NWF is urging EPA to set a final rule with more protective limits that will further promote wildlife friendly renewable energy development.

Benefits to Wildlife: Climate Change and Beyond



Northern pintail are one of thousands of bird species that will benefit from the Clean Power Plan (photo: USFWS)

Climate change poses an unprecedented threat to the wildlife and wild places we cherish, and to the natural resources that we all depend on. Warming temperatures, extreme weather events, droughts, and sea level rise all lead to habitat loss and species decline. If we don't take decisive action now to reduce carbon pollution, one-third of all wildlife species will face increased risk of extinction in the lifetime of a child born today.⁴

Climate change poses a direct threat to outdoor recreation, hunting, and fishing as droughts, wildfires, and higher temperatures impact fisheries and outdoor activities across the country. Many of America's iconic species are threatened by climate change, including northern bobwhite, pintail, sage grouse, lesser scaup, and many more. Big game like moose, mule deer, elk, and pronghorn are particularly impacted by heat, drought and an increase in parasites and disease due to climate change.⁵ Even small temperature increases in lakes, rivers, and streams can have dramatic impacts on fish such as salmon and trout.⁶

The benefits of the CPP go beyond protecting wildlife from climate change. It will reduce numerous additional pollutants and harmful byproducts of fossil fuel power that are damaging to wildlife, their habitats, and our health. In addition to carbon, fossil fuel plants also emit smog-forming, volatile organic compounds (VOC's), nitrogen oxides, sulfur dioxide, and cancer-causing pollutants like arsenic.⁷ By moving us away from dirty fossil fuels like coal, the CPP will remove up to 471,000 tons of

² RGGI. 2015. RGGI Benefits. http://www.rggi.org/rggi_benefits

³ USEPA. 2014. Fact Sheet: Clean Power Plan Framework. <http://www2.epa.gov/carbon-pollution-standards/fact-sheet-clean-power-plan-framework>

⁴ IPCC. 2013. http://www.ipcc.ch/pdf/assessment-report/ar4/wg2/ar4_wg2_full_report.pdf

⁵ NWF. 2013. Nowhere to Run: Big Game Wildlife in a Warming World. http://www.nwf.org/~media/PDFs/Global-Warming/Reports/NowheretoRun-BigGameWildlife-LowResFinal_110613.ashx

⁶ Eby, Lisa, et. Al. 2014. Evidence of Climate Induced Range Contractions in Bull Trout *Salvelinus confluentus* in a Rocky Mountain Watershed. PLOS one.

⁷ http://www.ucsusa.org/clean_energy/coalvswind/c02c.html#.VTZUt6PD8dU



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sulfur dioxide and 428,000 tons of nitrogen oxides, which will mean less acid rain and nitrogen pollution in lakes and estuaries.⁸

Additionally, by reducing reliance on coal-burning for power generation, the CPP will also help protect wildlife from mining practices that destroy habitat, destructive water intake systems at power plants, and leaking toxic coal waste ponds.

The CPP will furthermore deliver significant public health co-benefits, by cutting pollutants that blanket communities downwind or downstream of power plants across the country. It is estimated that for every dollar invested in the CPP, American families will see up to \$7 in health benefits.⁹ This rule represents real progress, not only for America's wildlife, fish and birds, but for the millions of sportsmen, wildlife watchers, and nature lovers who cherish America's outdoor heritage.

Ensuring the Clean Power Plan is Effective

We applaud the Administration and the EPA for taking a critical step in combating climate change by regulating carbon pollution from its largest source. The CPP and strong controls over big sources of pollution are important steps to begin holding polluters accountable for their contribution to the climate crisis. This plan is also essential for us to keep our international climate commitment of 26 – 28% reduction of carbon pollution by 2025.¹⁰

We need to ensure the EPA creates a strong final rule that will adequately protect wildlife and public health. Studies show that states can do even more to reduce their emissions by deploying renewable energy and energy efficiency measures.¹¹ It is critical to keep the pressure on the EPA and our state and congressional leaders to make sure the CPP is strong and effective. Having EPA properly account for these achievable savings in the final rule will result in even further pollution reductions and greater benefits for wildlife and communities. Wildlife can't wait for action on climate!



Help pronghorn by telling your legislators that you support the Clean Power Plan (photo: USFWS)

⁸ EPA. 2014. Carbon Pollution Emission Guidelines for Existing Stationary Sources: Electric Generating Units.

⁹ USEPA. 2014. Fact Sheet.

¹⁰ The White House. 2015. Fact Sheet: U.S. Reports its 2025 Emission Target to the UNFCCC. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2015/03/31/fact-sheet-us-reports-its-2025-emissions-target-unfccc>

¹¹ UCS. 2014. Strengthening the EPA's Clean Power Plan. <http://www.ucsusa.org/our-work/global-warming/reduce-emissions/role-of-renewable-energy-in-epa-clean-power-plan#.VTgHoqPD8dU>