



Communicating Climate Change in National Parks

Background

The National Park Service's interpretive and educational programs strive to connect people to the parks by providing opportunities for them to form their own intellectual, emotional, and physical connections to the meanings and values found in the parks' stories. Effective programs encourage the development of a personal stewardship ethic and broaden public support for preserving and protecting park resources so they may be enjoyed by present and future generations.

By practicing our interpretive principles, NPS staff are ideally positioned to raise public understanding of climate change and its effects on parks. By providing site-specific information about the many actions the NPS is taking to understand climate science, ensure the resiliency of our resources, and mitigate our carbon footprint, we may garner public support and encourage partnerships.

Approach

National parks provide tangible examples of the effects of climate change. To illustrate relevance, interpreters and educators can show visitors and the people in our nearby communities the local effects of climate change upon parks and explain how park planning and decision-making are influenced by this critical issue.

Four key communication messages were developed in the NPS Climate Change Response Strategy and serve as a foundation upon which to build interpretation and education products. These four key messages are:

- Climate change is happening and human activities are contributing to and accelerating it.
- Changing climate has consequences for parks, people, and the planet.
- The NPS is responding with practices that address climate change.
- The choices we make now may help to avoid catastrophic impacts in the future.

Additional actions have been identified as high priorities in the NPS Climate Change Response Strategy and include:

- Embrace education as an essential ingredient in the NPS response to climate change.
- Develop and implement training that will ensure our workforce has the necessary knowledge about climate change.
- Showcase the best practices of the NPS in mitigating climate change.
- Use innovative techniques and engagement practices to connect with our audiences and enlist public support on this issue.



National Parks serve as outdoor classrooms to raise awareness about climate change with our staff and the public. This group of kids are learning about the retreat of Exit Glacier at Kenai Fjords National Park in Alaska.

Status and Next Steps

Currently, a number of communication tools are available:

- NPS Climate change website (www.nps.gov/climatechange)
- A monthly web-based seminar series featuring climate change experts speaking on science, adaptation, mitigation and communication topics relevant to parks.
- A bimonthly newsletter to share climate related activities from NPS central offices, regions, and parks.
- Climate change summaries for specific bioregions – a series of 11 documents that summarize the current state of knowledge about climate change and impacts to protected areas.
- *Investigating Global Connections* a series of three online WebRangers activities for kids.
- *Climate Change in National Parks* brochure.
- Special climate change issue of *Park Science* magazine.

More Information

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<http://www.nps.gov/climatechange>