



Key Policy Recommendations

Climate Change-Fueled Weather Disasters: Costs to State and Local Economies

A new report from Datu Research, *Climate Change-Fueled Weather Disasters: Costs to State and Local Economies*, cites that the annual number of billion-dollar weather disasters has increased fourfold since 1980 – and the rising cost of inaction is putting a growing strain on disaster response and recovery budgets.

According to the report, the current economic downturn driven by COVID-19 outbreaks is a harbinger of the kind of economic and fiscal stressors that are already becoming increasingly common because of a rapidly warming planet.

The U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) estimates that between 2005 and 2019, the federal government, including the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and other agencies, spent at least \$450 billion on disaster assistance due to extreme weather events. Now, communities enduring climate-fueled extreme weather could need massive infusions of federal emergency payouts — all while federal disaster recovery, driven by the coronavirus pandemic and its economic fallout, outpaces available resources.

The cause of these mounting weather disaster costs: climate change. And it's only going to get worse, unless we act now.

To address the key findings in this report, Environmental Defense Fund (EDF) recommends that federal lawmakers prioritize the following policies to slow the rate of warming, improve and increase investments in climate adaptation, and protect the valuable natural resources on which our planet relies.

Protect Vulnerable Communities and Build Resilience

As outlined in this report, many communities, including lower-income households, across the U.S. are at higher risk of costly extreme weather events. To protect vulnerable communities that experience climate change-fueled extreme weather events first and worst, EDF recommends federal lawmakers make critical investments to strengthen adaptive, natural practices, and to ensure investments are occurring in advance of disasters and not just post-event:

Make Communities More Resilient and Emphasize Natural Infrastructure

As the number of severe weather events increases, it is imperative that communities have the financial flexibility and resources to fully prepare.

Make Communities More Resilient to Climate Change

Authorize and appropriate funding for a new Resilient Communities Revolving Loan Fund/Grant Program under FEMA.

Invest in Working Waterfronts

Invest funding in the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA's) Working Waterfront Loan and Grant Program to ensure coastal resiliency in the face of sea level rise, increased storm surge, and other coastal threats.

Coastal Restoration

Appropriate adequate funding for coastal restoration through NOAA's National Coastal Resilience Fund.

Pre-Disaster Mitigation

Authorize and appropriate funding for FEMA's Pre-Disaster Mitigation Grant Program including flood risk analysis and capacity support.





Invest in Building a 100% Clean Energy Economy

The United States must immediately begin reducing greenhouse gas emissions in order to reverse the billion-dollar extreme weather trends identified in this report. Those trends, which will worsen absent strong policy action, will increasingly strain local and state economies and amplify the crippling societal and economic costs imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic. EDF recommends that federal policy leaders urgently transition to a 100% clean economy by 2050—the year by which the world’s leading scientists recommend we achieve net-zero greenhouse gas emissions. Some immediate solutions that will put us on a path to a 100% clean future include:

1 Invest in Clean Forms of Transportation

The transportation sector is the largest source of carbon pollution in the U.S., encompassing everything from shipping ports and long-haul trucks, to airplanes and automobiles; and therefore provides the greatest opportunity to bend the curve on emissions.

Electric Vehicles and Infrastructure

Provide funding for states and local agencies to develop and implement charging infrastructure plans in clean energy corridors, at government facilities, companies, and ports.

Mass Transit

Provide funding to municipalities to support low-carbon public transit.

Convert School Bus Fleets

Establish a grant program within the U.S. Department of Energy to help school districts purchase zero-emission, electric school buses, along with the accompanying charging infrastructure, tied to a cleaner, modernized grid.



Make U.S. Built Electric Medium and Heavy-Duty Trucks Cost Competitive

Provide vouchers to American manufacturers to produce cost-competitive, zero-emission trucks.

2 Decarbonize and Modernize Electricity Generation and Infrastructure

Electricity generation also presents a major opportunity for curbing emissions, as it produces about one-third of all U.S. energy-related carbon pollution.

Clean Energy Incentives

Extend existing tax incentives for clean energy development.

Grid Modernization

Reauthorize and appropriate long-term funding for the U.S. Department of Energy's Smart Grid Investment Grant program (SGIG).

Cleaner Transmission

Authorize federal financing support similar to the Transportation Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (TIFIA), potentially through the U.S. Department of Energy.

3 Modernize Buildings and U.S. Manufacturing

Residential and commercial buildings, as well as manufacturing activities, are a significant source of carbon pollution in the U.S. In addition, building efficiency and manufacturing can be critical sectors for generating clean jobs.

Make Buildings More Energy Efficient

Authorize and appropriate funding for energy efficiency, electric cooking and heating, and building retrofit programs.

Create New Opportunities for U.S. Manufacturing

Authorize and appropriate funding for federal initiatives that invest in a low-carbon industrial sector.



4 Invest in Sustainable Agriculture

Agriculture emits an estimated 11 percent of total U.S. greenhouse gas emissions. Sequestering atmospheric carbon pollution in soils and by making farming practices more resilient and sustainable positions farmers at the forefront of climate problem-solving. Given the extensive losses that U.S. farmers, insurers, and taxpayers sustain — from devastating floods and severe drought, to early freezes that wipe out entire crops — investing in more resilient and more climate-friendly agricultural practices is critical.

Incentivize Resilient Farming Practices

Implement federal policies, including government-backed crop insurance products, that encourage and scale adoption of farming practices that improve soil productivity, reduce emissions, protect water quality, increase yields, and strengthen farms' resilience to climate change and changing weather.

Bolster Funding for USDA Conservation Programs

Increase funding for the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP). These programs support farmers' efforts to implement conservation practices on their farms, making farms more resilient to a changing climate and extreme weather events.

Set Sequestration Targets

Direct USDA to set a goal for emissions reduction and sequestration in the agriculture sector in line with achieving net zero emissions economy-wide by 2050 as well as establish interim emissions reduction targets in line with achieving the overarching goal.

Operationalize Climate Action Across the USDA

Establish a new entity within USDA, in coordination with EPA and NASA, which is tasked with measuring, reporting, and coordinating climate benefits across all USDA incentive programs and making recommendations on how to enhance USDA's capacity to capture greater climate benefits through new and existing programs.

State Aid to Expedite Forest Health

Prioritize and augment funding for states to expedite implementation of elements of State Forest Action Plans, required under 2008 Farm Bill, which improve forest resilience and increase rates of carbon sequestration.

