



Climate Change Communication in National Parks

Background

National Park Service (NPS) staff are ideally positioned to increase public understanding of climate change and its effects on parks. By providing site-specific information about actions the NPS is taking to understand climate science, include climate change considerations in management, and mitigate our carbon footprint, we may garner public support and encourage partnerships.

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

- Human activities are changing the Earth's climate.
- Climate change affects national parks and the treasures they protect.
- The National Park Service is addressing climate change.
- The choices we make today do make a difference.

In addition to the key messages, high priority communication actions have been identified by field practitioners and program staff and include:

- Embrace interpretation and education as an essential ingredient in the NPS response to climate change.
- Develop and implement training that will ensure our workforce has the most up-to-date knowledge, skills and tools to address climate change.
- Showcase the best practices of the NPS in adapting to and mitigating climate change.
- Use innovative techniques and engagement practices to connect with our audiences, encourage public involvement, and inspire personal action.

Communication Initiatives

- An innovative exhibit project has brought 13 parks together to develop a series of 24 waysides that highlight park-specific impacts from climate change. Using novel design elements and expanded mobile content, the waysides explore climate change connections between parks and encourage visitor interaction.
- A number of training courses and tools have been developed to enhance workforce climate change literacy. These include virtual course offerings for resource specialists and communicators, specialized trainings targeting agency leadership, and various online resources for self-paced learning.
- Engaging the next generation of park stewards in climate change communication through experiential field trips and internships.



National Parks serve as outdoor classrooms to raise awareness about climate change with our staff and the public. Above, an interpretive ranger talks with the next generation, at Mississippi National River and Recreation Area.

Communication Products

A number of climate change communication tools are available in parks and through the national office, including:

- NPS climate change website (www.nps.gov/climatechange)
- A monthly web-based seminar series featuring climate change experts speaking on topics relevant to parks.
- A quarterly newsletter to share climate related activities from NPS central offices, regions, and parks.
- A series of traveling exhibits available to parks that share examples of park actions relating to each of the four key messages.
- Online videos, briefing statements and a self-study training for interpreting climate change.
- High-level, quality trainings available for staff and volunteers in a variety of positions.

More Information

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