

# Ambition and Opportunity in America's New Climate Commitments

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Union of Concerned Scientists

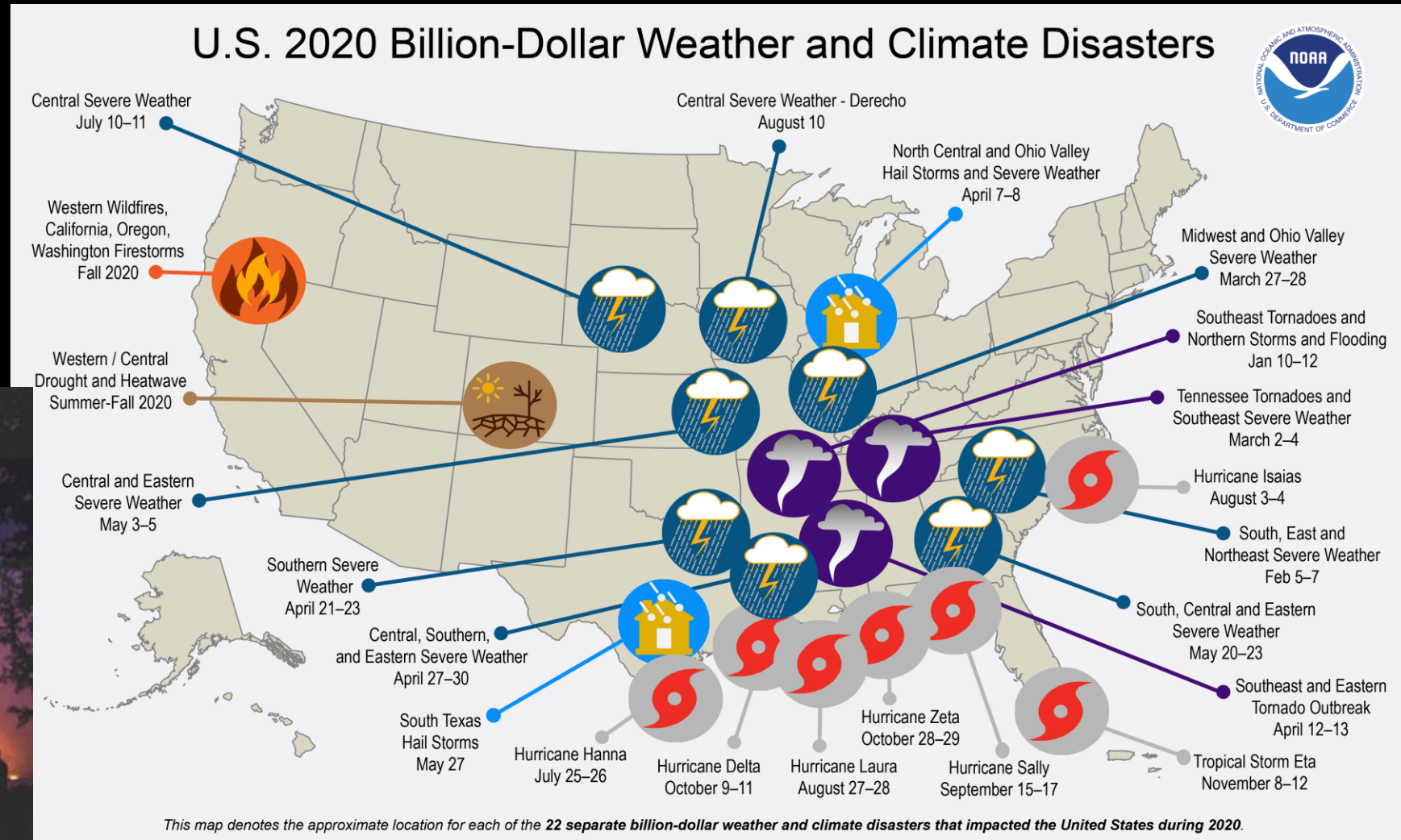
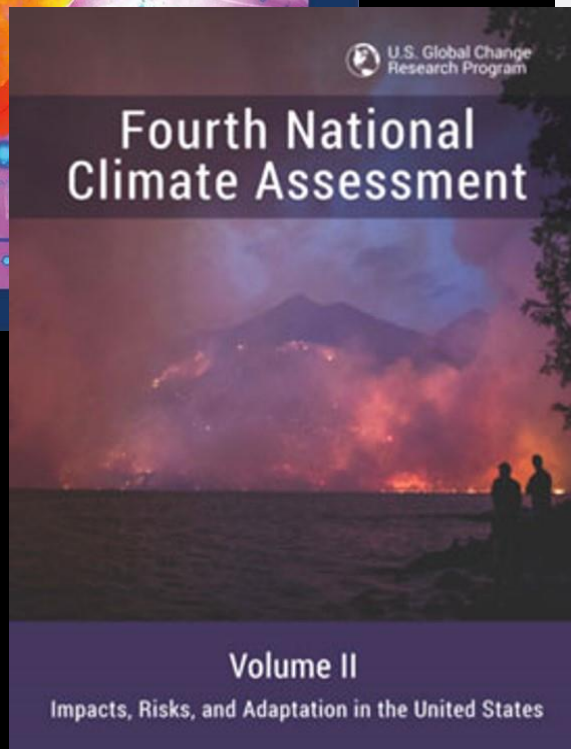
EESI Briefing  
Wednesday, May 12, 2021

[Union of  
Concerned Scientists]

Science for a  
healthy planet  
and safer world.

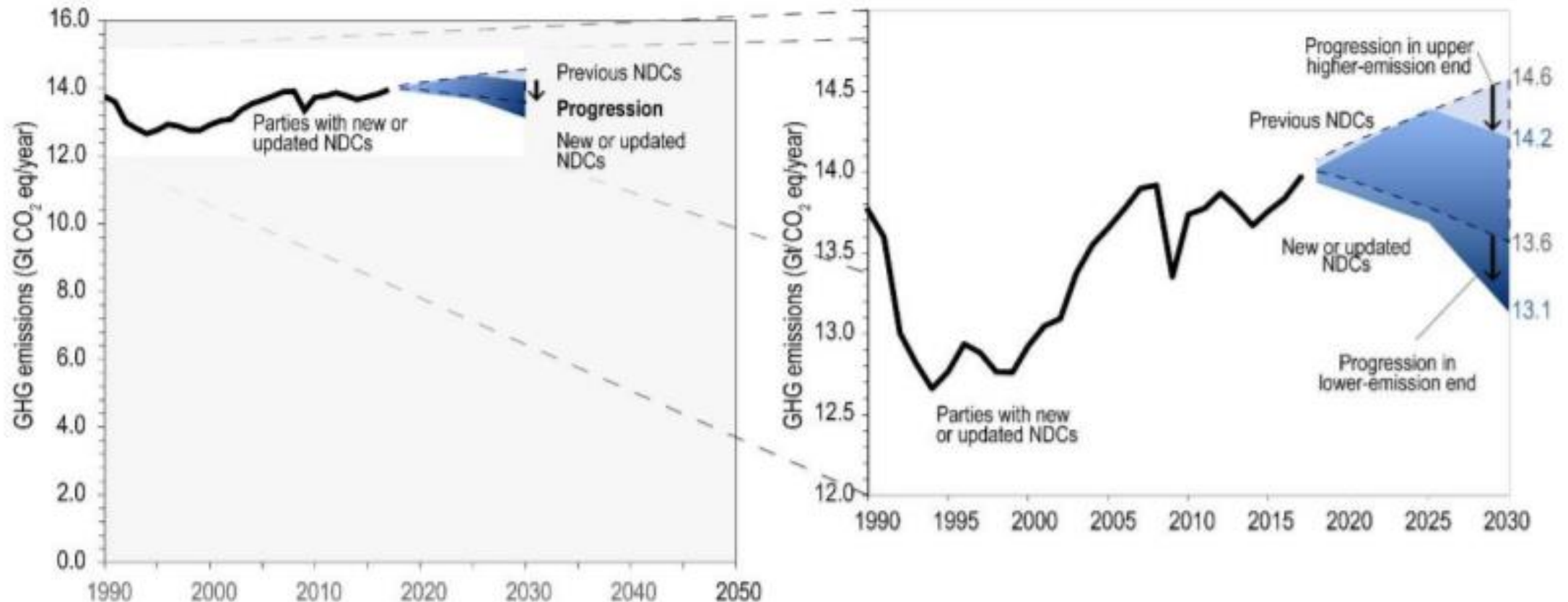


# [ Latest science underscores urgency to act



# [A “red alert for the planet”: The 2021 Initial NDC Synthesis Report

Projected range of greenhouse gas emission levels according to nationally determined contributions



# [ Scientists' Letter to the Biden Administration

**WE NEED BOLD  
CLIMATE  
ACTION NOW**

More than 1000 experts urge Biden  
to cut emissions in half by 2030.  
#AllInFor50

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**CLIMATE ACTION  
CAN'T WAIT**

More than 1000 scientists and experts  
call on the White House to strengthen  
clean car standards now.

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Signed by 1500+ scientists and  
experts, delivered on April 14

*"The United States, as one of the  
world's biggest contributors to global  
heat-trapping emissions, must take  
responsibility and commit to cutting  
its emissions by at least 50 percent  
below 2005 levels by 2030 and  
transitioning to a net-zero emissions  
economy no later than 2050."*



Local leaders across  
the country are calling  
for the US to cut  
emissions by at least  
50% by 2030.

**#AllInFor50**



**310**

Companies &  
Investors\*



**75**

Colleges &  
Universities



**1508**

Scientists &  
Experts



**388**

Business  
Leaders



**24**

Cultural  
Institutions

\*\$3 trillion in annual  
revenue, \$1 trillion in  
assets under  
management

# [Earth Day Summit Outcomes



## Centerpiece: US NDC

Commitment to cut net GHGs  
50-52% below 2005 levels by 2030

- Bold commitment and a necessary threshold for action
- More will be needed to align with science and global equity.

# [Additional outcomes from Earth Day Summit



- New commitments from Japan and Canada, potential signs of progress from China, India, South Korea, continued commitment from EU, UK
- US climate finance pledge
- Climate vulnerable nations' participation
- Whole-of-government participation
- Major Economies Forum relaunched
- Climate adaptation and resilience
- Youth climate activist, Xiye Bastida
- Private sector participation

# [Elements of a Robust U.S. International Contribution

Net GHG reductions of at least 50% below  
2005 levels by 2030

+

At least \$8 B in climate finance over 4 years

+

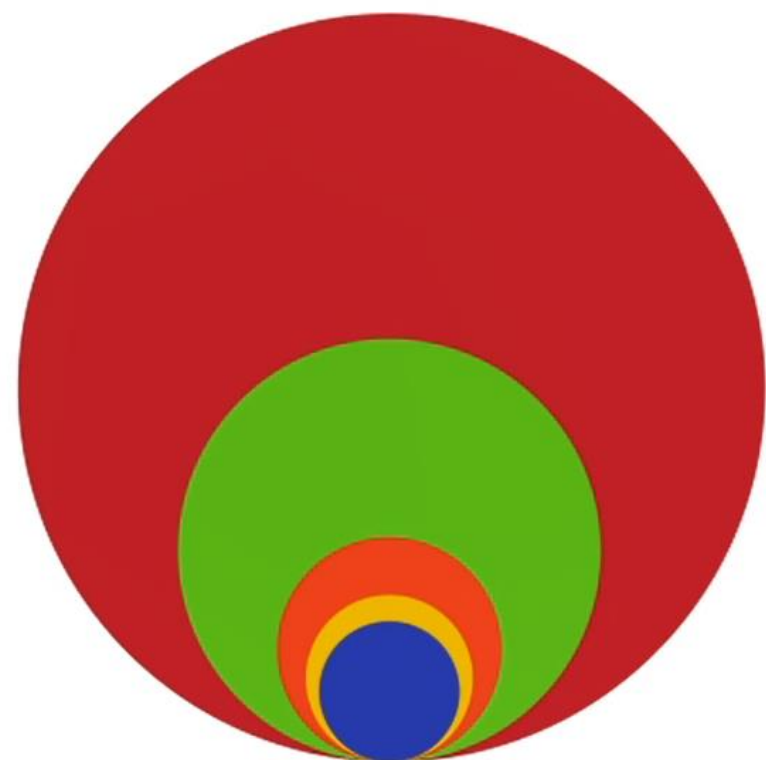
National adaptation strategy

+

Loss and Damage



# Top 5 Cumulative CO<sub>2</sub> Emitters, 1850-2019



**Emissions from fossil fuels  
(thousands of metric tons)**

415,025 ● United States

230,314 ● China

115,513 ● Soviet Union/Russia

92,626 ● Germany

78,171 ● United Kingdom

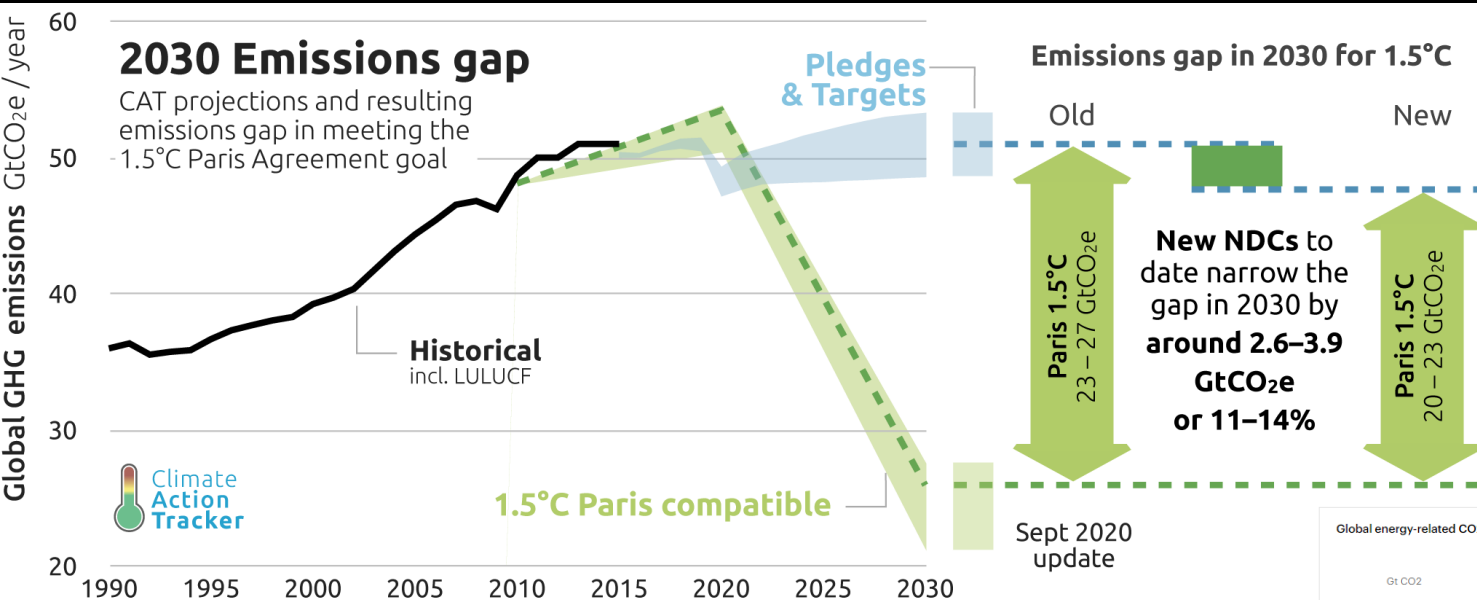
▼  
2019  
▲

Data source: CDiAC via Our World in  
Data, Carbon Brief and Carbon Monitor  
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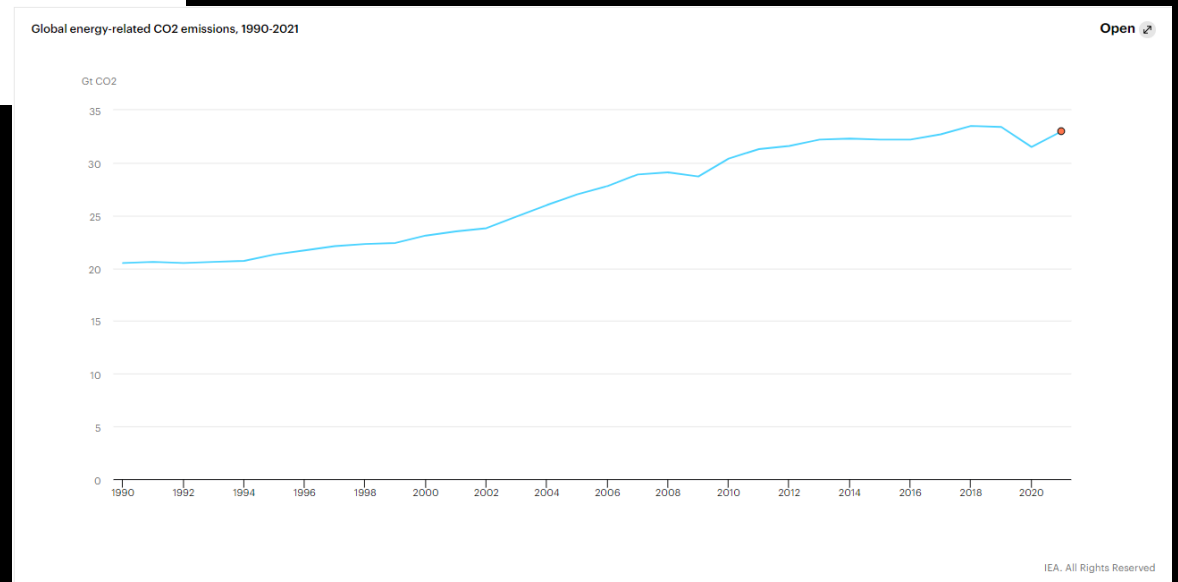
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# [Much more to do...



**IEA: Global carbon dioxide emissions are set for their second-biggest increase in history (in 2021)**



# [Deep 2030 emission cuts are feasible

- Energy Innovation. *A 1.5C Pathway to Climate Leadership for the United States*
- Princeton University. *Net-Zero America by 2050: Potential pathways, deployments and impacts*
- U of Berkeley, GridLab. *The 2035 Report*
- NAS. *Accelerating Decarbonization in the United States: Technology, Policy and Societal Dimensions*
- University of Maryland. *Charting an ambitious U.S. NDC of 51% Reductions by 2030*
- MIT. *Meeting Potential New U.S. Climate Goals*
- NRDC. *The Biden Administration Must Swiftly Commit to Cutting Climate Pollution at Least 50 Percent by 2030*
- EDF. *Recapturing U.S. Leadership on Climate: Setting an Ambitious and Credible Nationally Determined Contribution*

# [Common Themes for 2030 emissions reductions



- Ramp up energy efficiency and renewable electricity
- Phase out coal and limit the rush to natural gas
- Advance electrification of energy end-uses economywide (Transportation, Buildings, Industry) where possible
- Invest in low-carbon, climate-resilient infrastructure e.g. a modernized electricity system, transmission, energy storage, electrification infrastructure, public transit
- Safeguard + enhance carbon stores in soils, forests, wetlands
- Make deep cuts in methane emissions and HFCs
- Invest in clean energy R&D
- **Systemic, just and equitable changes, not just techno changes**

# [Necessary and Achievable Goals

- **Multiple techno-economic studies** show that cutting emissions at least 50% below 2005 levels by 2030 is possible, and affordable, for the US.
- Beyond what the models can capture, there are **important transformative opportunities** through societal changes, shifts in market rules, incentives and structures, and changes in governance.
- **How we get there matters.** Done right, there are **multiple benefits** including significant public health gains, millions of good-paying jobs, addressing environmental injustices, a fair transition for coal workers & communities, fair and sustainable food systems.
- **U.S. ambition can unlock ambition** from other major emitters
- **Inadequate/incremental action** in this consequential decade greatly increases the risks of breaching the Paris Agreement temperature goals, leading to even **more harmful and costly climate impacts.**

# [ Domestic climate agenda

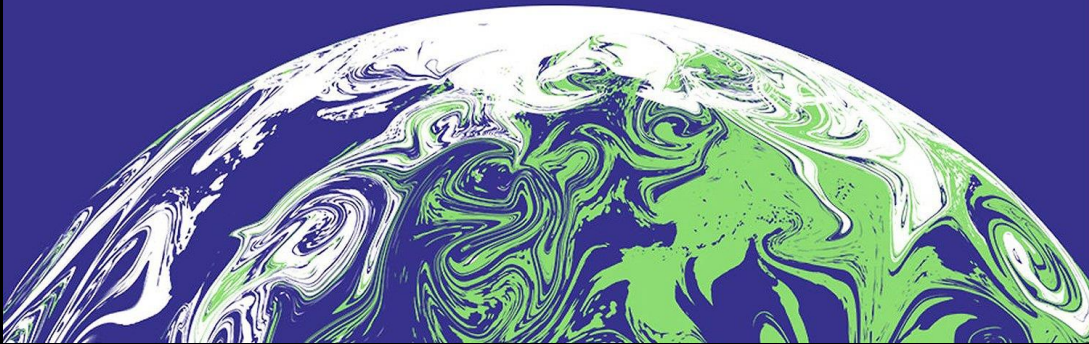


- American Jobs Plan: A down payment on climate action
- Clean, climate-resilient infrastructure investments
- Justice40 Initiative
- Jobs, domestic manufacturing base/supply chains, high-road labor standards
- A fair transition for coal workers and coal-dependent communities
- Just and equitable economic recovery
- Climate risk disclosure
- Holding fossil fuel companies accountable

# [What's next on the road to COP26 in Glasgow?



**THE CLIMATE  
HAS NO BORDERS**



- Bilateral and multilateral meetings
- An emerging high ambition coalition
- Ramping up climate finance
- Connecting economic recovery to climate ambition
- A just, equitable climate agenda
- Containing the global COVID-19 pandemic
- Worsening climate impacts



[ Thank you. Any questions? [rcleetus@ucsusa.org](mailto:rcleetus@ucsusa.org)

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