



Fact Sheet

Timeline of Progress Made in President Obama's Climate Action Plan

August 2015

On June 25th, 2013, President Obama [announced his Climate Action Plan \(CAP\)](#) during a speech at Georgetown University. This comprehensive plan is the first of its kind and was developed by the Administration to strategically achieve three overarching goals: cut domestic carbon pollution, prepare the United States for climate change impacts, and lead international efforts to address global climate change.

The first goal, cutting U.S. carbon pollution, aligns with President Obama's commitment to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by [26-28 percent below 2005 levels by 2025](#). Strategies to meet this goal include reducing GHG emissions from the power sector and promoting energy efficiency and clean energy projects around the country. The Administration's plan to cut emissions from light-duty vehicles through 2025, put into place pre-CAP during Obama's first term, is a major component to reaching the 2025 emissions target. The second goal, preparing for climate change, is meant to provide federal agencies and U.S. communities with the resources they need to improve their resiliency against sea level rise, extreme weather events, drought, and the other increasingly harmful impacts of climate change. The third goal, leading international efforts to address global climate change, is meant to establish the United States as a world leader in climate action. The United States is calling for international bilateral and multilateral agreements to speed up the global transition away from fossil fuels and to increase international investment in clean energy technologies. This includes positioning the United States to be a key player in international climate negotiations, particularly in the approaching United Nations (UN) Climate Conference in Paris.

In the two years since the release of the Climate Action Plan, the Obama administration has been busy laying the groundwork to achieve its ambitious goals. This has included executive actions, proposed and finalized agency regulations, investment strategies, budget requests, and announced international bilateral agreements. These major developments, largely undertaken as the planet experienced its hottest year on record (2014), put the United States on a path to reduce its climate contributions and vulnerability. But much more action will be needed to avoid future climate change impacts. This fact sheet will highlight some of the key CAP-related actions taken by the Administration so far, though many more are expected in the near future.

Timeline of Progress

Aug. 3, 2015	The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) releases the final rule for the Clean Power Plan, which seeks to cut carbon emissions from existing power plants 32 percent below 2005 levels by 2030.
July 20, 2015	The White House honors 12 faith leaders for their work on climate action. Evangelical, Franciscan, Lutheran, Islamic, Jewish, Hindu, Church of God and Baptist faiths are represented.
July 9, 2015	The White House releases a progress report, Highlighting Federal Actions Addressing the Recommendations of the State, Local, and Tribal Leaders Task Force on Climate Preparedness and Resilience , and announces a series of new climate resilience focused actions, including over \$25 million in private and public investments.

July 2, 2015	The EPA finalizes its rule to reduce hydrofluorocarbon (HFC) emissions , a potent manmade greenhouse gas. The rule is projected to reduce HFC emissions by 54 to 64 million metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent by 2025.
June 30, 2015	The White House announces a new bilateral climate agreement with Brazil , in which each country commits to increase renewable energy production to 20 percent of its energy portfolio by 2020.
June 23, 2015	The White House hosts the first-ever Summit on Climate Change and Health . President Obama announces numerous actions to protect communities from the health impacts of climate change.
June 19, 2015	The EPA and the Department of Transportation (DOT) jointly propose a new round of emissions and fuel efficiency standards for medium- and heavy-duty vehicles through model year 2025, which will reduce GHG emissions by one billion metric tons.
June 8, 2015	The White House launches a public-private partnership, Climate Services for Resilient Development , to assist developing nations in building resilience against the impacts of climate change. An initial \$34 million is provided to developing nations for this purpose.
May 20, 2015	The White House releases a report detailing the national security implications of climate change.
April 23, 2015	The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) announces a new initiative, Building Blocks for Climate Smart Agriculture & Forestry , to help farmers, ranchers, and forest land owners respond to climate change. The USDA reports that this initiative will reduce GHG emissions and enhance carbon sequestration by more than 120 million metric tons per year by 2025.
April 21, 2015	President Obama unveils two executive actions to support energy infrastructure resilience: USDA announces \$72 million to support rural electric infrastructure projects with major investments to drive solar energy and the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) announces the Partnership for Energy Sector Climate Resilience , which will improve U.S. energy infrastructure resilience against extreme weather and climate change impacts.
April 21, 2015	DOE releases the first installment of its first ever Quadrennial Energy Review .
April 14, 2015	The EPA releases the 20th Annual Greenhouse Gas Inventory showing a nine percent decrease in GHG emissions in 2013 over 2005 levels.
April 7, 2015	The White House announces a set of actions to protect communities from climate-related health impacts, including the release of a <i>Climate and Health Assessment</i> from the U.S. Global Change Research Program, the release of a study from the Centers for Disease Control identifying the greatest climate change-related health impacts and possible mitigation strategies, and the first ever White House Climate and Health Summit (which took place on June 23, 2015).
March 31, 2015	The United States submits its Intended Nationally Determined Contribution (INDC) to the United Nations' Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in preparation for the 21st annual Conference of the Parties. In its INDC, the United States reaffirms its goal of reducing GHG emissions 26 to 28 percent from 2005 levels by 2025.
March 19, 2015	President Obama signs an executive order directing federal agencies to reduce their GHG emissions by a minimum of 40 percent by 2025 from 2008 levels, and to increase electricity generation from renewable energy to 30 percent of total generation.
Feb. 17, 2015	The Department of Interior (DOI) announces it will make \$8 million available to fund projects to promote tribal climate change adaptation and planning projects.

Feb. 10, 2015	The White House announces the Clean Energy Innovation Initiative to catalyze \$2 billion in private sector investment for climate change solutions.
Feb. 2, 2015	The White House releases its fiscal year 2016 budget request with a strong emphasis on climate change mitigation and adaptation. Notable requests include allocating \$7.4 billion to clean energy technology programs, repealing \$4 billion in tax subsidies to fossil fuel producers, and allocating \$2.7 billion for the U.S. Global Change Research Program for climate change programs.
Jan. 30, 2015	President Obama signs an executive order establishing the Federal Flood Risk Management Standard to improve community resilience against the impacts of increased future flooding.
Jan. 25, 2015	The United States and India announce a new climate agreement which includes provisions to expand their successful Partnership to Advance Clean Energy Research (PACE-R). The Partnership will benefit from increased research funding in solar energy, building efficiency, advanced biofuels, and smart grid and storage technology.
Jan. 14, 2015	The White House announces a plan to cut methane emissions from the oil and gas sector by 40–45 percent from 2012 levels by 2025. A proposed rule is expected to be released later in 2015.
Dec. 24, 2014	The White House Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) releases a proposal to have all federal agencies consider the effects of GHG emissions and climate change in their evaluation of all proposed federal actions.
Nov. 21, 2014	The United States helps negotiate an agreement of the parties to the Montreal Protocol to replenish the Multilateral Fund with \$507.5 million to help phase out hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs).
Nov. 17, 2014	The President’s State, Local, and Tribal Leaders Task Force on Climate Preparedness and Resilience releases its recommendations .
Nov. 15, 2014	The United States and Japan announce pledges of \$3 billion and \$1.5 billion , respectively, to the Green Climate Fund to support global GHG reductions and climate resiliency.
Nov. 11, 2014	The United States and China announce a bilateral climate deal in which the United States commits to reducing its carbon emissions 26-28 percent below 2005 levels by 2025, and China undertakes to peak its carbon emissions by 2030 or earlier.
Oct. 8, 2014	The White House announces its Climate and Natural Resources Priority Agenda , which identifies a series of government actions that can enhance the climate resiliency of domestic natural resources and promote carbon sequestration.
Aug. 6, 2014	The EPA announces proposed rulemaking to prohibit certain hydrofluorocarbons due to their potency as greenhouse gases.
Aug. 1, 2014	The USDA, EPA and DOE release their Biogas Opportunities Roadmap , a voluntary strategy for the agricultural sector to reduce methane emissions.
July 9, 2014	The EPA announces its proposed rulemaking to approve new climate-friendly alternatives to HFCs.
June 25, 2014	The White House releases the one-year progress report on the Climate Action Plan.
June 18, 2014	The EPA publishes its proposed rule for the Clean Power Plan.
June 10, 2014	The Department of the Navy announces plans to purchase 37 million gallons of drop-in biofuels as part of its next fuel purchase.

May 9, 2014	The White House announces that \$2 billion will be spent on energy efficiency upgrades to federal buildings over the next three years through energy savings performance contracts. This is in addition to the \$2 billion investment announced in 2011.
May 9, 2014	DOE confirms the building industry's latest commercial building energy codes should cut energy waste by up to 30 percent more than current building energy codes.
May 6, 2014	The Obama administration releases the Third U.S. National Climate Assessment , the most comprehensive source of scientific information on domestic climate change impacts.
March 19, 2014	The White House releases its Strategy to Reduce Methane Emissions , outlining approaches to reduce this potent GHG across multiple sectors while also improving emission measurements.
March 19, 2014	The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) launch the Climate Data Initiative , which brings together public and private sector data to help U.S. communities develop resiliency plans and resources.
March 4, 2014	The White House releases its FY15 budget request , which includes the creation of a \$1 billion Climate Fund to help local communities adapt to and recover from extreme weather, a 26 percent increase to the DOT to help fund more energy-efficient transportation, a call for the elimination of \$4 billion in fossil fuel subsidies, and the creation of a \$954 million emergency disaster fund aimed at suppressing wildfires.
Feb. 18, 2014	President Obama directs the EPA and DOT to develop and finalize new fuel efficiency and GHG standards for medium- and heavy-duty vehicles by March 2016.
Feb. 5, 2014	USDA announces the creation of the Regional Agricultural Hubs for Risk Adaptation and Mitigation to Climate Change. The seven locations around the country will be dedicated to studying the effects of climate change on agricultural production.
Feb. 5, 2014	The DOT announces \$55 million for public transit agencies to acquire zero-emission buses and the space to support them, via the new Low or No Emission Vehicle Deployment Program.
Jan. 9, 2014	President Obama signs a Presidential Memorandum directing the federal government to conduct the first-ever Quadrennial Energy Review.
Dec. 5, 2013	President Obama signs a Presidential Memorandum on Federal Leadership on Energy Management, directing the federal government to purchase at least 20 percent of its electricity from renewable sources by 2020.
Dec. 3, 2013	The Administration expands the Better Buildings Challenge , a \$2 billion program to finance energy efficiency upgrades in commercial buildings, to multifamily housing units as well. Additionally, the Administration announces the creation of the Better Buildings Accelerator which will support state and local government-led efforts to cut energy waste and to promote greater efficiency.
Nov. 15, 2013	The White House announces a cross-agency National Drought Resilience Partnership to help communities prepare for future droughts and reduce the impact of these events.
Nov. 1, 2013	President Obama signs an executive order directing federal agencies to support community climate resiliency efforts. This includes the creation of the State, Local, and Tribal Leaders Task Force on Climate Preparedness and Resilience, with 26 officials from 23 states and territories.

Aug. 19, 2013	The Hurricane Sandy Rebuilding Task Force releases its rebuilding strategy to help provide a model for communities that face risks associated with climate change and extreme weather events.
June 25, 2013	President Obama announces his Climate Action Plan .

Climate Action Plan Spotlights

This section provides details on a major action taken to further each of the three overarching goals of the CAP.

Goal 1—Cut Carbon Pollution in the United States: *The Clean Power Plan*

Power generation produces nearly [40 percent of all GHG emissions](#) in the United States. Reducing power sector emissions is, therefore, a key strategy outlined in the CAP. On June 2, 2014, the EPA announced a proposed rule, the Clean Power Plan (CPP), to reduce power sector carbon emissions. Authorized under section 111(d) of the *Clean Air Act*, the CPP mandates specific power sector emission reductions in each state, while giving states autonomy over how to achieve those reductions. The Administration released the final rule on August 3, 2015, calling for a [32 percent cut from 2005 levels by 2030](#), a small increase over the target in the proposed rule.

The Clean Power Plan provides each state with individualized emission reduction targets, specific to its needs and circumstances. Each state's target was derived by assessing its capacity to make use of the three "building blocks" EPA has identified as pathways to emission reductions: making fossil fuel power plants more efficient, using more low-emitting power sources, and using more zero-emitting power sources. States can decide which strategies to incorporate into their implementation plans, which must be submitted to the EPA by September 2018.

The Clean Power Plan is controversial. Opponents claim it will reduce grid reliability, raise electricity costs, and negatively impact low income and elderly citizens. Supporters argue that it will greatly reduce domestic carbon emissions, improve public health conditions, and benefit the economy by expanding the growing industries of renewable energy and energy efficiency.

Goal 2—Prepare the U.S. for Climate Change Impacts: *The President's State, Local, and Tribal Leaders Task Force on Climate Preparedness and Resilience*

Adaptation strategies in the Climate Action Plan emphasize the importance of enabling and empowering local leaders to improve the climate resilience of their communities. To further this goal, President Obama signed an [executive order](#) on November 1, 2013, establishing the State, Local, and Tribal Leaders Task Force on Climate Preparedness and Resilience. The Task Force was directed to provide recommendations on how the federal government could most effectively assist communities in developing climate resilience.

The Task Force, which consisted of 26 U.S. governors, mayors, county officials and tribal leaders, spent a year researching and consulting with a diverse group of stakeholders. Their work culminated on November 17, 2014, with the release of a 45-page document [outlining 35 key recommendations](#). Overall, the Task Force's recommendations emphasized the need for federal agencies to consider climate-related risks in all their decision-making processes, to maximize opportunities for actions that both reduce emissions and increase resilience, to increase coordination across federal agencies, to provide actionable data on climate impacts so as to inform local decision making, and to consult and cooperate with indigenous communities on all resilience efforts.

The Obama administration has been quick to take action on the Task Force's recommendations, even before they were finalized. On July 16, 2014, President Obama [announced](#) a \$1 billion National Disaster Resilience Competition, \$10 million in funding for tribal communities to improve climate resilience, and \$236.3 million in grants to improve rural electric infrastructure. On November 17, 2014, the day the final recommendations were published, the White House [released the Climate Resilience Toolkit](#), a comprehensive guide to assist local communities in improving climate resilience. On July 9, 2015, the [Administration released a report](#) highlighting the progress made on the Task Force's recommendations and announced new climate resilience efforts. The new efforts included additional funding for tribal communities and the National Disaster Resilience Competition, \$10

million for climate resilience in low-income communities, and a new AmeriCorps program dedicated to assisting communities improve their capacity to address climate change.

Goal 3—Lead International Efforts to Address Global Climate Change: *Bilateral Climate Agreements.*

One point that is continually emphasized in the U.S. climate debate is that domestic mitigation efforts will be ineffective if the emissions of developing countries continue to rise unabated. For that reason, the Climate Action Plan stressed the importance of international bilateral agreements on climate. In the two years since the Climate Action Plan was announced, President Obama has reached historic agreements with China, India, and Brazil, three of the world's [top ten greenhouse gas emitting nations](#).

On November 11, 2014, the United States and China [announced a deal](#) in which the United States agreed to reduce its emissions 26-28 percent by 2025, and China, for the first time ever, agreed to cap its emissions by 2030. Additionally, each country committed to further cooperate on clean energy research and to promote alternatives to hydrofluorocarbons. On January 25, 2015, President Obama and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi [announced a new five-year memorandum of understanding](#) on energy security, clean energy and climate change. Among other initiatives, it renewed their jointly funded \$125 million Partnership to Advance Clean Energy Research. On June 30, 2015, the United States and Brazil [reached a deal](#) to expand each country's renewable energy generation to 20 percent of their energy portfolio by 2030. Furthermore, Brazil agreed to restore 12 million hectares of rainforest by 2030.

These agreements are part of President Obama's goal to achieve a binding international climate treaty at the United Nations' Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) 21st annual Conference of the Parties (COP21) this December in Paris. Additionally, the United States has [submitted an aggressive Intended Nationally Determined Contribution \(INDC\)](#) to the UNFCCC, reaffirming its goal of reducing domestic carbon emissions by 26 to 28 percent from 2005 levels by 2025.

Conclusion

The strategies and goals outlined in the Clean Action Plan demonstrate an understanding of both the existing climate change impacts in the United States, and of the actions necessary to prevent increased future impacts. By prescribing direct work with community and local leaders on climate resilience, the CAP exhibits an understanding of who is most greatly impacted by climate change and a commitment to protect citizens from harm. By outlining efforts for aggressive domestic mitigation efforts, while also committing to help developing nations reduce their emissions, the CAP recognizes that effective climate action must take place at both the local and global scales.

After two years of implementation, and despite a continued battle with Congress, the Administration has made visible progress towards achieving its climate goals. A number of the Clean Action Plan's short term targets have already been met, such as issuing regulations to limit power sector carbon emissions, developing a Climate Resiliency Toolkit, and working to mitigate methane and hydrofluorocarbon emissions. Additionally, steps have been taken towards achieving the longer term and more aggressive goals outlined in the CAP, such as achieving an international climate treaty. Moreover, the steady pace of new executive actions, regulations, and international partnerships since the CAP's announcement indicates that addressing climate change will likely remain a top priority for the remainder of President Obama's second term. In the run-up to the release of the Clean Power Plan's final rule, White House Chief of Staff Denis McDonough underlined this by [stating that](#) "there's not a more important and pressing issue on the President's agenda than climate."

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The Environmental and Energy Study Institute (EESI) is a non-profit organization founded in 1984 by a bipartisan Congressional caucus dedicated to finding innovative environmental and energy solutions. EESI works to protect the climate and ensure a healthy, secure and sustainable future for America through policymaker education, coalition building, and policy development in the areas of energy efficiency, renewable energy, agriculture forestry, transportation, buildings and urban planning.