



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, ensure the resiliency of our resources, 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:

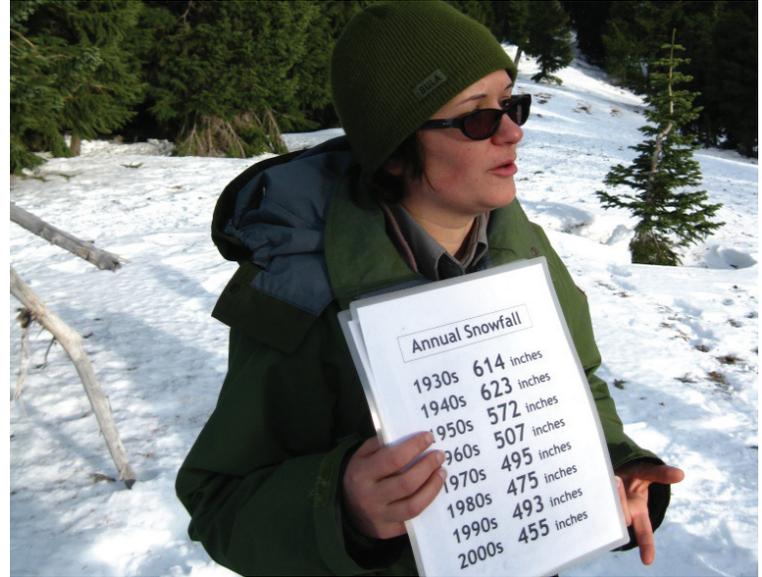
- Human activities are changing the Earth's climate.
- Climate change affects national parks and the treasures they protect.
- The National Park Service is addressing climate change.
- The choices we make today do make a difference.

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 and enlist public support on this issue.

Communication Initiatives

- An innovative exhibit project has brought 13 parks together to develop a series of 24 waysides that highlight park specific impacts of climate change as well as utilize quick response (QR) codes to connect them to each other allowing visitors learning about glacier melt in Alaska to see how that affects sea level rise in Florida.
- To enhance workforce literacy a number of training tools are now available and web-based courses offered. Examples include: a video series on place-based climate literacy and another one on management actions, a self-study course for interpreting climate change, a leadership community of practice for park managers, and an online module for resource specialist.
- 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 illustrates declining winter snowpack at Crater Lake National Park.

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.
- 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.
- 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.

More Information

Angie Richman

Communication Specialist
Climate Change Response Program

ph: (970) 267-2136
email: Angie_Richman@nps.gov

Leigh Welling, Ph.D.

Chief
Climate Change Response Program

ph: (970) 225-3513
email: Leigh_Welling@nps.gov

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