



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:

- Climate change is happening and human activities are contributing to and accelerating it.
- Changing climate has consequences for parks, people, and the planet.
- The NPS is responding with practices that address climate change.
- The choices we make now may help to avoid catastrophic impacts in the future.

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 necessary knowledge and skills 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

A number of communication initiatives are underway to address the priority actions outlined above.

- An innovative exhibit project has brought 10 parks together to develop a series of 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.
- With an increased emphasis on enhancing workforce literacy a number of training tools are under development and web-based courses offered. Examples include: a series of place-based climate literacy videos are in the final stages of production and an online course aimed at park managers will be offered in 2013.



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 science, adaptation, mitigation and communication topics relevant to parks.
- A bimonthly 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.
- *Investigating Global Connections* a series of three online WebRangers activities for kids.
- *Climate Change in National Parks* brochure.

More Information

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