NATIONAL WILDLIFE FEDERATION

INSPIRING AMERICANS TO PROTECT WILDLIFE FOR OUR CHILDREN'S FUTURE.

Fact Sheet

CONFRONTING GLOBAL WARMING

Carbon Pollution Limits on Power Plants:

Critical for Safeguarding America's Health, Wildlife, and Outdoor Heritage

Power plants are the nation's single largest source of climate change-causing air pollution, pumping roughly 2.4 billion tons of carbon dioxide into the air each year,[1] accounting for over one-third of all U.S. carbon pollution.[2] **Currently, there are no limits on the amount of carbon pollution that can be released from power plant smokestacks** and this air pollution results in higher average temperatures, extreme weather, and serious impacts on public health and wildlife.

On June 25, 2013, President Obama announced his Administration's Climate Action Plan, a series of executive actions to reduce carbon pollution, prepare the U.S. for the impacts of climate change and lead international efforts to address global climate change. The **cornerstone of this plan is a directive to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to update clean air standards for new and existing power plants by limiting carbon pollution.**

Following up on the historical response EPA received on last year's proposal for the first-ever national standards limiting carbon pollution from new power plants, the Agency has taken the first step in the Climate Action Plan and released an updated proposal for new power plants. Known as the "Carbon Pollution Standards for New Power Plants," these standards will **ensure that all new power plants are built with the most modern pollution control technology available**, significantly reduce the amount of carbon pollution emitted from their smokestacks, and stimulate new construction and utility jobs.

Specifically, the new standards will:

- Shift electricity generation to power plants using modern, less polluting technologies.
- Require new power plants to emit approximately 60% less carbon pollution than the average coal-fired power plant.
- Tackle a major contributor to dangerous levels of asthma-inducing ground level smog.[3]

President Obama and EPA Administrator McCarthy have committed to building upon these proposed standards by working with a broad range of stakeholders to develop carbon pollution standards for existing power plants. The upcoming standards for existing plants are essential to ensure we as a nation protect our public health, safeguard wildlife, and confront climate change.

Safeguard Wildlife

America's wildlife is threatened more than ever by the carbon pollution that is causing climate change. If we continue to pollute at the current rate, scientists predict that rising global temperatures will lead to major extinctions around the globe and **commit over 50% of all species to extinction.**[4]

Climate change is leading to not just direct habitat loss but more insidious changes as well. For example, decreases in snowpack result in a massive loss of fish spawning sites and, increased summertime temperatures will alter wildlife communities of forests and streams forever. Due to these irreversible changes fish are disappearing from lakes and streams, big game populations are being pushed out of their historic range, and duck and wetland habitats are vanishing. Taking action to reduce carbon pollution and confront our climate crisis is essential to safeguard our country's wildlife and outdoor heritage.

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Protect Public Health


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Uncontrolled industrial carbon pollution from power plants is significantly harming our health. Today, **154 million Americans already suffer air pollution levels that are too dangerous.**[5] Scientists warn that climate change caused by carbon pollution is creating conditions, including warmer temperatures, which increase the risk of unhealthful ozone levels in the air we breathe. As a result of higher smog levels, respiratory illness and future lung disease will become even more prevalent.[6]

Poor air quality, exacerbated by industrial carbon pollution, can also lead to premature death,[7] shortness of breath,[8] chest pain,[9] wheezing and coughing,[10] and susceptibility to respiratory infections.[11] The health of Americans is closely linked to the health of the environment around us. Clean air and water, threatened by uncontrolled carbon pollution, are essential to the health of people and communities across the country.

Build on the Success of the Clean Air Act

Passed by Congress with overwhelming bi-partisan support over 40 years ago, the Clean Air Act is part for our country's proud record of environmental protection. The Act has a strong and proven track record of protecting our lakes, forests, wildlife, national parks, and other natural treasures from the devastating impacts of air pollution while allowing our economy to prosper. Moving forward with new standards to limit carbon pollution from power plants is a continuation of this legacy.

EPA's new proposed carbon pollution limits are the result of directives from both the Supreme Court and Congress. In 2007, the Court confirmed in its landmark decision, Massachusetts v. EPA, that the Clean Air Act requires EPA to protect our public health and welfare from air pollutants – such as carbon pollution from power plants that contributes to climate change. And, in 2011, the Court restated this finding noting, "emissions of carbon dioxide qualify as air pollution" and that "the critical point is that **Congress delegated to EPA the decision whether and how to regulate carbon-dioxide emissions from power plants**."[12]

The new standards limiting carbon pollution from power plants follow the same approach that has been successful in reducing other dangerous air pollutants, such as sulfur dioxide and nitrogen oxides, while keeping our economy growing. The Clean Air Act ensures that power plants must reduce their carbon pollution using technology that has been *adequately demonstrated* and considers both the *energy and economic impacts and costs* that may result from meeting the new standards. This process provides a key assurance that the new carbon pollution limits will not have an adverse impact on our economy.

Modernize our Power Plants

EPA's new carbon pollution limits are critical to ensuring our energy is produced by the most up to date and efficient technology. Almost three-quarters of all coal-fired power plants currently generating electricity are 30 years or older[13] and many have been around for over 50 years![14] The new rules will ensure our power sector modernizes and moves our economy forward.


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Between 1970 and 1990, **actions to reduce air pollution saved the nation an estimated $22 trillion in health care expenses and lost productivity at a cost of $523 billion**—a remarkable 40-1 benefit-cost ratio. The innovation and ingenuity of American industry has shown us, time and time again, that meeting new air pollution limits can be achieved faster and at lower cost than initially predicted.[15]

Developing state of the art power plants that limit carbon pollution will have a net positive economic and employment impact by spurring demand for pollution control investments and creating additional demand for workers.[16]

A 2010 study by the Department of Commerce found that in our country, air pollution control equipment alone generated revenues of **$18 billion per year,** including exports of more than **$3 billion**. In the United States, approximately **119,000** companies are engaged in the environmental technology business and this industry generated approximately **$300 billion** in revenues, **$43.8 billion** in exports, and supported close to **1.7 million** jobs.[17]

States Have Already Set Power Plant Carbon Limits

EPA's proposed standard requires that new coal-fired power plants limit carbon pollution to a rate of 1,100 lbs. CO2/MWh and natural gas plants meet a standard of 1,000 lbs CO2/MWh. Many states have already started this process and passed laws or enacted similar standards for new power plants, and have begun setting pollution limits on existing plants.

- **California** (SB 1368): Requires that new electricity generation does not exceed a carbon pollution rate of 1110 lbs. CO2/MWh.[18]
- **Illinois** (SB 1987): New coal-fired power plants that opt into the state's clean-coal program must capture and store 50% of their carbon pollution; pollution standard steadily increases to 90% by 2018.[19]
- **Minnesota** (SF145): Prohibits the construction of any new power plants that would produce a net increase in carbon pollution.[20]
- **Montana** (HB 25): New coal-fired power plants must capture and store 50% of their carbon pollution.[21]
- **New York** (Proposed 6 NYCRR Part 251): Requires new power plants to limit carbon pollution to 925 lbs. CO2/MWh.[22]
- **Oregon** (HB 3283) & (SB 101): New natural gas power plants must limit carbon pollution to 675 lbs. CO2/MWh[23]; standards for all types of new power plants not yet established.[24]
- **Washington** (SB 6001): Requires all new base load electricity generation to limit carbon pollution to 1,110 lbs CO2/MWh.[25]

Moving Forward

To view & comment on EPA's proposal, visit www.epa.gov/carbonpollutionstandards

In addition to the carbon pollution standards for new plants, President Obama has directed EPA to develop draft standards for existing power plants by June, 2014 with final standards due in 2015. The existing source standards are the most important step the Administration can take right now to address the currently unabated pollution driving climate change in this country. The EPA will be engaging a variety of stakeholders in the process, relying heavily on input from States who will be charged with implementing the standards.

National Wildlife Federation will be engaging with our members, activists, and partners over the coming months and years to ensure the EPA issues the strongest standards possible to ensure we confront climate change to protect wildlife and our children's future.

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