

January 2014 Progress Report: President Obama's Climate Action Plan

In June 2013, President Obama laid out the case for action on climate change and the steps his Administration will take to address it. The [Climate Action Plan](#) includes measures to cut carbon pollution, prepare the United States for the impacts of climate change, and lead international efforts to combat global climate change. Seven months later, the Administration has made substantial progress implementing the President's plan. Already, the Administration has announced new efficiency standards, permitted renewable energy projects on public lands, and proposed carbon pollution standards for new power plants; alongside our State, Tribal, local, and private sector partners, we are taking steps to make our communities more resilient to the effects of severe weather; and we are working with other countries to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases internationally. At home and abroad, we are making real progress.

Cutting Carbon Pollution in America. Building on key first-term actions such as fuel economy standards, the Administration has taken important new steps under the Climate Action Plan to move to cleaner sources of power and improve energy efficiency across our economy.

Carbon Pollution Standards for Power Plants: In September 2013, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) announced revised carbon pollution standards for new power plants. In addition, EPA is working to develop standards for existing power plants under the Climate Action Plan. And, under a Presidential Memorandum signed in June 2013, EPA has kicked off this process with extensive outreach to states, utilities, other stakeholders, and the public throughout the fall. EPA's standards will build on strong State-level leadership: Today 10 states already are implementing their own market-based programs to reduce carbon pollution, more than 35 states have renewable energy targets, and another 25 states have set energy efficiency targets to cut energy waste.

Permitting Renewable Energy on Federal Lands: The Department of the Interior (DOI) is making progress towards achieving the Climate Action Plan goal of permitting enough renewable energy projects on public lands by 2020 to power more than 6 million homes. Since June 2013, DOI has approved several large renewable energy projects, including a 500 megawatt wind project in Arizona and a 40 megawatt geothermal energy project in California. In addition, in July DOI held its first-ever offshore wind lease sale for areas off the shores of Rhode Island and Massachusetts, and, in the fall, DOI held an additional offshore wind lease sale for an area off the shores of Virginia and announced the next auction for an area off the shores of Maryland.

Support for Advanced Fossil Energy: In December, the Department of Energy (DOE) announced a final loan guarantee solicitation for \$8 billion in support for innovative and advanced fossil energy projects and facilities that substantially reduce greenhouse gas – such as carbon capture and low-carbon power systems.

Clean Energy Manufacturing: On December 12, DOE announced \$150 million in clean energy manufacturing tax credits to 12 U.S. manufacturers, and on November 7 DOE announced the selection of 18 projects across the country to research innovative, second-generation technologies that will help improve the efficiency and drive down costs of carbon capture processes for new and existing coal-fired power plants. Most recently, on January 15, 2014, President Obama announced \$70 million in funding to establish Clean Energy Manufacturing Innovation Institute, which will focus on wide bandgap semiconductor-based power electronics that can have applications in solar and wind energy, LEDs, and electric vehicles.

New Energy Efficiency Standards: Since August, DOE has issued five proposed energy conservation standards for appliances and equipment and finalized energy conservation standards for an additional product category. The savings from these rules, if finalized as proposed, and when combined with final rules already issued under this Administration, would surpass 70 percent of the President's goal for emissions reductions from energy conservation standards. Altogether, the standards will help cut consumers' electricity bills by hundreds of billions of dollars.

The Better Buildings Challenge: The Better Buildings Challenge, focused on helping American commercial and industrial buildings become at least 20 percent more energy efficient by 2020, continues to drive progress. More than 120 diverse organizations, representing over 2 billion square feet are on track to meet the 2020 goal: cutting energy use by an average 2.5 percent annually, equivalent to about \$58 million in energy savings per year. And, under the Challenge expansion announced in December, 50 new multifamily housing partners – representing roughly 200,000 units and over 190 million square feet – have committed to cutting their energy use by 20 percent in ten years. In addition, December marked the launch of Better Buildings Accelerators, a new track of the program designed to support state- and local government-led efforts to cut energy waste and eliminate market and technical barriers to greater building efficiency. The public sector organizations participating in the Accelerators Program, including states, cities, and school districts, are committing to develop and demonstrate streamlined performance contracting practices and to offer more than \$1.2 billion in performance contracting over the next 3 years.

Federal Energy Management: On December 5, President Obama signed the [Presidential Memorandum Federal Leadership on Energy Management](#) directing the Federal Government to buy at least 20 percent of its electricity from renewable sources by 2020 – more than double the current level. To improve agencies' ability to manage energy consumption and reduce costs, the Memorandum directs Federal agencies to use Green Button, a tool developed by industry in response to a White House call-to-action that provides utility customers with easy and secure access to their energy usage information in a consumer-friendly format. In addition, over the past two years, Federal agencies have committed to a pipeline of \$2.3 billion in performance-based contracts for energy efficiency upgrades. On December 3, as part of the Better Buildings Challenge, the President committed to expand and extend the use of performance-based contracts through 2016 to upgrade the energy efficiency of Federal buildings.

Rural Utilities Services: On December 4, the Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced it will provide rural electric cooperatives up to \$250 million to lend to business and residential customers for energy efficiency improvements and renewable energy systems. The program will help American families and businesses in rural areas cut their energy bills by making financing more readily available for energy efficiency measures that reduce home energy use by up to 40 percent.

Armed Forces: The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, working with the Army Energy Initiatives Task Force (EITF), has awarded Multiple Award Task Order Contracts (MATOC) to qualified solar and wind technology contractors. The MATOC represents a major step forward in the procurement of renewable energy for the Army and the other Services that will significantly reduce timelines by streamlining acquisition processes. Additionally, on November 5, the White House hosted a Champions of Change event highlighting Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans Advancing Clean Energy and Climate Security. The event honored 12 veterans that are using the skills they learned while in the service to help secure our clean energy future

Quadrennial Energy Review: On January 9, 2014 President Obama signed a [Presidential Memorandum establishing the Federal government's first Quadrennial Energy Review \(QER\) process](#), fulfilling an important commitment from his Climate Action Plan and ensuring that Federal energy policies continue to meet the nation's economic, environmental, and security goals. Over the next four years, the QER will provide a comprehensive review of these policies in the context of a changing energy landscape, with an initial focus on our nation's infrastructure for transporting, transmitting, and delivering energy

Preparing the United States for the Impacts of Climate Change. Even as we take new steps to cut carbon pollution, we must also prepare for the impacts of a changing climate that are already being felt across the country. Since the President's address, the Administration has released and begun implementing the Hurricane Sandy Task Force Rebuilding Strategy, which is helping guide investments to protect families, small businesses, and communities across the affected region from the risks posed by sea level rise and more extreme weather events. The Administration has also released a notice of funding availability from the Federal Transit Administration for resilience projects in response to Hurricane Sandy, announced public-private and intergovernmental partnerships to bolster extreme weather response and increase climate resilience, released reports identifying vulnerabilities to climate change in the energy sector, and recognized local leaders who are helping their communities prepare for the impacts of climate change. Additional steps include:

Executive Order on Preparedness: In November of 2013, President Obama signed [Executive Order 13653 directing agencies to help American communities strengthen their resilience to extreme weather and prepare for other impacts](#). Under the EO, agencies are working to modernize Federal programs to better support local preparedness for climate change impacts, manage our natural lands to improve resilience, and develop information, data, and tools to for use by decision makers. The EO also established a State, Local and Tribal Leaders Task Force on Climate Preparedness and Resilience, which

is composed of 26 elected officials from across the country. The Task Force hosted its inaugural meeting on December 10 and has already begun working to advise the Administration on how the Federal Government can remove barriers to climate change resilient investments; modernize Federal programs, grants, and loans to better support local efforts; and develop the tools necessary to help communities prepare for climate change on the local level.

Boosting the Resilience of our Land and Water Resources: On November 15, the White House launched a cross-agency National Drought Resilience Partnership to make it easier for communities seeking help to prepare for future droughts and reduce drought impacts. This Partnership enhances the efforts of Federal agencies already working with communities, businesses, and farmers and ranchers to build resilience to drought and help prepare their communities for future drought events. On July 19, USDA and DOI announced a Federal, local, and private partnership to protect America's water supply from the risks of wildfire. The Western Watershed Enhancement Partnership is a comprehensive approach to identify and mitigate risks of wildfire to parts of our nation's water supply, irrigation, and hydroelectric facilities;

Identifying Vulnerabilities of Key Sectors to Climate Change: Agencies are also analyzing the impacts of climate change on key sectors of our economy and developing strategies to address them. Last summer, DOE released a report outlining the impacts of climate change on the energy sector, which included recognition of the damage Gulf Coast hurricanes are inflicting on offshore platforms, pipeline infrastructure, and refineries. DOE and the Council of Economic Advisors (CEA) also released a report on electric grid resilience, *Economic Benefits of Increasing Electric Grid Resilience*, which evaluated the current capacity of the grid to maintain power during natural disasters, analyzed the economic impacts of grid failure, and provided recommendations on how to better protect the grid. Federal agencies also released *Oceans and Marine Resources in a Changing Climate*, a comprehensive look at the effects of climate change on our oceans and marine ecosystems.

Leading International Efforts to Address Global Climate Change. Just as no country is immune from the impacts of climate change, no country can meet this challenge alone. Over the past seven months, the Administration has made significant process in leading multilateral and bilateral efforts to reduce global greenhouse gas emissions while working to advance international climate negotiations. Specifically:

U.S. Climate Action Report: On January 1, 2014, the Department of State submitted the 2014 U.S. Climate Action Report to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). The Report, which is part of an agreed process to hold all countries accountable for taking action on climate change, describes progress toward the U.S. 2020 emissions reduction goal, including actions taken through the President's Climate Action Plan.

Leading Global Sector Public Financing Towards Cleaner Energy: U.S. agencies took steps to implement the President's announcement that the U.S. would end public financing for new

conventional coal plants overseas, except in the poorest countries. In October, the Treasury Department issued revised guidance governing U.S. votes on coal projects in the multilateral development banks, and the U.S. subsequently voted “no” on a coal power plant project for the first time in the Asian Development Bank. In December, the Export-Import Bank of the United States (Ex-Im Bank) revised its supplemental guidelines for high carbon intensity projects, bringing them in line with the President’s announcement. In September, heads of state from the five Nordic countries announced that they would be joining the U.S. coal finance policy, and the United Kingdom followed suit in November. The World Bank, European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, and European Investment Bank all announced similar policies in the second half of 2013.

Combatting Short-Lived Climate Pollutants: Building on their breakthrough June 8 agreement on hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs) in Sunnylands, CA, President Obama and Chinese President Xi Jinping agreed to continue working together on HFC phase down, including toward establishing a contact group under the Montreal Protocol. On September 6, G-20 leaders expressed support for using the expertise and institutions of the Montreal Protocol to phase down HFCs. In addition, the Climate and Clean Air Coalition (CCAC) to reduce short-lived climate pollutants (methane, black carbon, and HFCs, collectively “SLCPs”) grew to over 70 members, including key non-state partners like the World Bank, UNEP, and World Health Organization. CCAC partners are hard at work implementing several initiatives to reduce methane and black carbon from waste, landfills and agriculture; avoid methane leakage, venting, and flaring from oil and gas production; phase down HFCs through new technologies; and address black carbon from brick kilns and diesel engines. The Coalition has attracted nearly \$60 million in funding pledges from donor countries in support of this work.

Leading Efforts to Address Climate Change through International Negotiations: At the annual U.N. climate conference in Warsaw in November, countries decided on steps designed to lead to an ambitious global climate agreement in Paris in December 2015. Countries ready to do so will submit their post-2020 mitigation contributions no later than March 2015. The United States anticipates meeting that first quarter deadline in the same time frame as other major economies.

Expanding Bilateral Cooperation with Major Emerging Economies: Climate change was a central theme of the U.S.-China Strategic and Economic Dialogue in July. The U.S.-China Working Group on Climate Change launched five new initiatives to deepen bilateral efforts to address greenhouse gas emissions, including through reducing heavy-duty vehicle emissions; smart grids; carbon capture, utilization, and storage; collecting and managing greenhouse gas data; and energy efficiency in buildings and industry. In December, during Vice President Biden’s visit to China, the United States and China committed to undergo fossil fuel subsidy reviews under the G20 process. In addition, China committed to implement aggressive low sulfur fuel and motor vehicle emissions standards and for the first time will include China VI emissions standards. These standards, when implemented, will have significant air quality and climate benefits and reduce vehicle fuel use. The United States pledged to provide technical assistance to help China achieve these goals. During Indian Prime

Minister Singh's visit to Washington in October, the U.S. and India launched a new large-scale off-grid clean energy initiative to help bring clean energy to those under-served by the electricity grid, as well as an initiative to help India deploy advanced space cooling technology.

Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation: In November, the United States, along with Norway and the U.K., launched the Initiative for Sustainable Forest Landscapes (ISFL), a \$280 million public-private partnership to support forest and land use initiatives in developing countries that will promote reduced greenhouse gas emissions from the land sector, more sustainable agriculture, and smarter land use planning and policies through a unique combination of public and private sector incentives.