

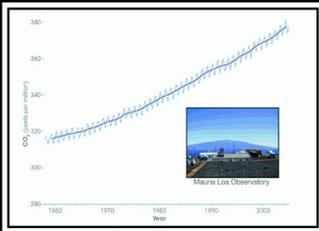
Arrange for Change



CHANGE has always been a powerful force of nature. National Parks tell stories that help us understand and appreciate how our lives are influenced by change.

We hear more and more about "climate change" every day. The scientific consensus is that "global temperature is now rising at a rate unprecedented in the experience of modern human society" (Arctic Climate Impact Assessment, 2004). Scientists also say most of the warming observed over the last 50 years is attributable to human activities.

In addition to teaching us about the past, parks can help us make the critical choices for today that will affect how our children will need to adapt in the future.



Climate Change is Happening



Warmer winters and longer, more intense periods of melting have increased the rate of glacial retreat in many parks, as demonstrated by the Northwestern Glacier at Alaska's Kenai Fjords National Park. It is estimated by scientists from the U.S. Geological Survey that by 2030, many of the glaciers in Montana's Glacier National Park will be completely gone.

In Yosemite, the pika population is in danger of extinction as warming temperatures are shifting their cool habitat higher and higher on the mountainsides. Eventually, if warming continues, they may have nowhere higher to go.



Changes Disrupt Park Use

Higher temperatures in spring and summer and earlier melting of the snow pack in recent years have contributed to an increase in the frequency and duration of wildland fires. This increase in wildfires often causes park facilities to close. The 2006 fire season set a 45-year-high in the number of acres burned. In addition to fires, heat waves frequently make it difficult to be outdoors. 2006 was also the hottest January through July on record in America's parks.



In many parks, wintry weather is beginning later and ending earlier each year. Although this often makes for a longer season of hiking and camping, it reduces opportunities for recreational skiing and other winter sports due to inadequate snow cover. These impacts often have economic implications.



There is Much We Can Do



Parks are performing evaluations through "Climate Friendly Parks Workshops," in partnership with the Environmental Protection Agency, to evaluate energy usage and gain efficiencies where possible. During the workshops, managers develop practical strategies to reduce emissions.

Many parks have on-going research and monitoring of vulnerable resources and several have climate science researchers specifically addressing indicators that relate to climate change impacts.

Perhaps one of the best strategies for coping with change is for each person to become "Carbon Neutral" in their daily lives. This can be accomplished by reducing energy use and investing in practices and alternate technologies that offset the carbon emissions we are generating.



We are at this moment participating in one of the very greatest leaps of the human spirit to a knowledge not only of outside nature but also of our own deep inward mystery."

- Joseph Campbell (1904-1987)



The National Park Service is already working to respond to these changes. How will you arrange for change?