

### **The Threat of Carbon Pollution: Washington**

We have a moral obligation to leave our children a planet that's not polluted or damaged, and by taking an all-of-the-above approach to develop homegrown energy and steady, responsible steps to cut carbon pollution, we can protect our kids' health and begin to slow the effects of climate change so we leave a cleaner, more stable environment for future generations. Climate change impacts including severe weather, asthma attacks, prolonged allergy seasons, and sea-level rise are affecting our security, our economy, and our communities. In 2012 alone, the cost of weather disasters exceeded \$110 billion in the United States, and climate change will only increase the frequency and intensity of these events. Today, we already set limits for arsenic, mercury and lead, but we impose no limits on how much carbon pollution our power plants release. Carbon pollution is contributing to a higher risk of asthma attacks and more frequent and severe storms, floods, heat waves, and wildfires, driving up food prices and threatening our communities. The President's plan is a comprehensive approach to cutting the pollution that causes climate change and threatens public health, setting us on a path to make our communities healthier, safer, and more resilient.

#### **THE IMPACT OF POLLUTION AND EXTREME WEATHER IN WASHINGTON**

In 2011, power plants and major industrial facilities in Washington emitted more than 20 million metric tons of carbon pollution—that's equal to the yearly pollution from more than 4.4 million cars.

Recent incidents provide a reminder of the impacts to our public health and costs due to extreme weather in Washington. Although we cannot say that climate change is responsible for any individual event, climate change is already increasing our risks from these events.

- Dry winters are depleting snow pack. 2012 had the third lowest snowpack on record in the West.
- In Washington, there were over 4,400 hospital admissions for asthma in 2011, with an average charge of over \$17,200 for each stay.
- The drought of 2001 stranded hundreds of thousands of juvenile salmon due to low flows in the Columbia River and kept them from traveling to the Pacific Ocean. In spring 2005, above-average ocean temperatures and reduced ocean movement resulted in a 20 to 30 percent drop in juvenile marine salmon populations.

#### **ANTICIPATED CLIMATE-RELATED RISKS IN THE NORTHWEST**

Climate change is already impacting coastal cities, water supplies, wildfires, and natural resources in the Northwest. Snowpack is projected to decline by as much as 40 percent in the Cascades in the next 30 years, and hotter and drier landscapes will increase the risk of forest fires. Overall, the West has experienced a nearly fourfold increase in large wildfires in recent decades, leading to respiratory illnesses and other harm from fire-related air pollution. Increased insect outbreaks and changing species composition will present additional challenges for forest products industries. Decreasing summer stream flows will reduce hydroelectric generation capacity, which currently accounts for 70

percent of the region's electricity supply. Meanwhile, rising temperatures will increase electricity demand for air conditioning and refrigeration, adding more stress on the electricity system and resulting in more carbon pollution. One third of current streams may be too warm to support salmon by the end of the century, further impacting the region's fishing industry. Sea-level rise will increase coastal erosion, increasing the vulnerability of property, tourism, and livelihoods in the heavily populated Puget Sound area.

## **CUTTING CARBON POLLUTION AND INCREASING RESILIENCE IN WASHINGTON**

Climate change is a long-term problem, but we can make substantial progress through a series of steady and responsible steps. The President's plan builds from progress already underway to work with states, local communities, and the private sector to reduce carbon pollution and to prepare our Nation for the impacts that cannot be avoided. Since 2009, President Obama has taken a number of common sense measures to combat carbon pollution, including:

- ***Investing in Clean Energy:*** During the President's first term, the United States more than doubled its use of renewable energy from wind, solar, and geothermal sources. In Washington, renewable energy generation from these sources increased 60 percent. Since 2009, the Administration has supported tens of thousands of renewable energy projects throughout the country, including more than 130 in Washington, generating enough energy to power more than 270,000 homes and helping Washington meet its goal of generating 15 percent of its electricity from renewable energy sources by 2020.
- ***Improving Efficiency:*** Using less energy to power our homes, businesses and vehicles is critical to building a clean and secure energy future. President Obama has made essential investments in research and development for energy efficiency advances, and set new standards to make the things we use every day – from cars to microwaves – more efficient.
  - President Obama established the toughest fuel economy standards for passenger vehicles in U.S. history. These standards will double the fuel efficiency of our cars and trucks by 2025, saving the average driver more than \$8,000 over the lifetime of a 2025 vehicle and cutting carbon pollution.
  - Since October 2009, the Department of Energy and the Department of Housing and Urban Development have jointly completed energy upgrades in more than one million homes across the country, saving many families more than \$400 on their heating and cooling bills in the first year alone.
  - As part of the President's Better Buildings Challenge, Seattle committed to reducing energy intensity 20 percent by 2020 in 23 million square feet of city buildings. Kitsap County, Thurston County and the Camas School District have also made strong commitments.
- ***Preparing Communities for the Consequences of Climate Change:*** The Obama Administration has worked since its earliest days to strengthen the Nation's resilience to climate change impacts, including investing in critical science and tools, developing the first-ever Federal agency climate adaptation plans, and directly partnering with communities. For example, The U.S. Departments of the Interior and Agriculture are launching a Western Watershed Enhancement Partnership, a cooperative effort in Western states, including Washington, to avoid damaging wildfires through fire suppression projects, while also encouraging efficient water management.