

# HATCH CENTER

## POLICY REVIEW

---

### CONSERVATIVE SOLUTIONS TO CLIMATE CHANGE

#### INTRODUCTION

Sen. Shelley Moore Capito

#### ESSAYS

A. Scott Anderson

Peter R. Huntsman

Christopher Barnard

Jim Sorenson

Sen. John Barrasso, M.D.

Grace Stanke

Neil Chatterjee

Brian Steed

Carine S. Clark

Rep. Bruce Westerman

Rep. John R. Curtis

ORRIN G. HATCH  
FOUNDATION

## **About the Orrin G. Hatch Foundation**

Civility and solutions—these are the twin pillars of the Orrin G. Hatch Foundation. They are the ideals that underpinned the senator’s service and that guide the organization’s mission today.

The Foundation seeks to engender greater civic participation and understanding, to facilitate bipartisan dialogue, and to foster commonsense solutions to our nation’s most pressing problems by convening the greatest minds in American public life for high-level discussions on the public policy challenges of the day.

## **Contact Information**

411 E. South Temple

Salt Lake City, Utah 84111

(385) 355-4380

[info@orrinhatchfoundation.org](mailto:info@orrinhatchfoundation.org)

[www.orrinhatchfoundation.org](http://www.orrinhatchfoundation.org)

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction.....	<i>Sen. Shelley Moore Capito</i>	i
Collaboration Is Vital in the Crusade for Climate Resilience .....	<i>A. Scott Anderson</i>	1
Conservatives Reclaim Environmentalism and Push for Action.....	<i>Christopher Barnard</i>	5
A Policy Climate in Need of Change .....	<i>Sen. John Barrasso, M.D.</i>	11
GOP Can Play a Key Role on Climate Policy.....	<i>Neil Chatterjee</i>	15
Reframing the Narrative for a Sustainable Future .....	<i>Carine S. Clark</i>	19
Why We Need to Talk About the Climate .....	<i>Rep. John R. Curtis</i>	25
Climate Change Policy Must Return to Reality .....	<i>Peter R. Huntsman</i>	29
Another Perspective: ESG and Impact Investing Address Societies Biggest Challenges.....	<i>Jim Sorenson</i>	33
Nuclear Science in a World Where Nuclear Is Not Understood.....	<i>Grace Stanke</i>	37
Restoration of the Great Salt Lake .....	<i>Brian Steed</i>	41
Conservation Starts with Conservative Ideals.....	<i>Rep. Bruce Westerman</i>	47



# Introduction

---

Too often, conservatives are accused of denying climate change and not taking action to address it. Too many Americans believe the Left’s messaging that their side wants to save the planet and ours wants to destroy it.

What gets lost in hyperbole and soundbites is the reality that we don’t have to choose between addressing climate change and producing abundant, affordable energy Americans can rely on every day. Conservatives believe giving the private sector the flexibility and time to innovate is key.

For example, take the American experience with hydraulic fracturing over the last 20 years. From 2005 to 2022, natural gas production doubled, thanks in part to industry’s technological innovations to develop shale resources in states like West Virginia.<sup>1</sup> Meanwhile, American greenhouse gas emissions dropped by 15 percent during that same time.<sup>2</sup> The U.S. now also provides our allies liquefied natural gas (LNG) at an environmental premium. Estimates suggest LNG produced here in the United States is 30 percent cleaner than in Russia, the world’s second-largest natural gas producer.<sup>3</sup>

As the American shale gas case study demonstrates, what is good for our nation’s energy security can also be good for the climate.

Giving our private sector the ability to innovate on a sensible timeline is a different approach than the one progressives take, which prefers inflexible, top-down mandates. Many are clamoring for a “green” transition to occur in every sector of our economy as fast as you can flip on a light switch.

The Obama administration pursued regulations that jeopardized our electric grid, and President Biden’s administration, staffed by some of the very same government officials, has followed suit. Their agenda centers on quickly closing down baseload power plants, delaying job-creating energy projects, and inflicting penalties on employers that don’t comply with a radical climate agenda.

I believe there’s a better way. America’s climate policy does not have to be at odds with energy and economic security.

We have more effective ways to reduce carbon emissions that don’t put jobs on the chopping block and threaten energy security. Conservatives believe economic opportunity and private sector innovation, not overbearing government mandates,

---

<sup>1</sup> Robert Rapier, *U.S. Natural Gas Production Sets New Record High*, Forbes (Aug. 30, 2023), <https://www.forbes.com/sites/rrapier/2023/08/30us-natural-gas-production-sets-new-record-high/?sh=2cda699a19a2>.

<sup>2</sup> Alfredo Rivera et al., *Preliminary US Greenhouse Gas Emissions Estimates for 2022*, Rhodium Grp. (Jan. 10, 2023), <https://rhg.com/research/us-greenhouse-gas-emissions-2022/#.-:text=With%20the%20slight%20increase%20in,only%2015.5%25%20below%202005%20levels>.

<sup>3</sup> Selina Roman-White et al., *Life Cycle Greenhouse Gas Perspective on Exporting Liquefied Natural Gas from the United States: 2019 Update*, Nat’l Energy Tech. Lab. (Sept. 12, 2019), <https://www.energy.gov/sites/prod/files/2019/09/f66/2019%20NETL%20LCA-GHG%20Report.pdf>.

will lead to solutions that ultimately drive an energy transition that doesn't leave American workers and families behind.

I'm betting on American innovation to lead the way in reducing emissions and addressing climate change in the future as it has in the past. To do that, we need employers in emerging technologies like carbon capture, hydrogen, and nuclear energy—all of which would reduce emissions—to see America as the ultimate destination to flourish. Conservatives must continue to push for reforms to overbearing government regulations and our broken permitting system so those barriers do not drive job creators and economic opportunities to other countries.

For example, we need a favorable regulatory climate for emerging nuclear energy technologies. Nuclear energy is the only zero-emission baseload power source available, already providing one-fifth of America's electricity.<sup>4</sup> Recently, the Plant Vogtle site in Georgia became the first new nuclear power plant to come online in a generation. More should follow as new designs reduce costs and complexity while making our fleet even safer.

I've authored and will continue supporting legislation establishing a favorable regulatory environment for the next generation of advanced reactors. We have a critical window to assert American leadership in developing these smaller reactors that rely on different fuel types than traditional, larger plants. Future development of advanced reactors will allow us to continue our historical leadership in reducing emissions. To do that, we must push for timely approval of projects in the pipeline.

Conservatives support reducing emissions and addressing climate change, and America should be proud of its climate record. Over the last 20 years, no other country has reduced its emissions of pollutants, including carbon dioxide, more than the United States. According to the World Health Organization, Americans enjoy some of the cleanest air in the world.<sup>5</sup>

To continue to build on that success, we must not be afraid to speak out in favor of commonsense environmental solutions that provide needed flexibility and time for our industries to develop. That is why this year's *Hatch Center Policy Review*, focused on conservative climate solutions, is so timely in bringing attention to this important issue. As conservatives, we have solutions that will prevail, and I'm confident both the United States and our planet will be better for it. I hope you enjoy reading the following essays.

– U. S. SENATOR SHELLEY MOORE CAPITO (R-WEST VIRGINIA)

---

<sup>4</sup> U.S. Energy Information Admin., *What Is U.S. Electricity Generation by Energy Source?* (Oct. 2023), <https://www.e.ia.gov/tools/faqs/faq.php?id=427&t=3>.

<sup>5</sup> World Health Org., *SDG Indicator 11.6.2 Concentrations of Fine Particulate Matter (PM2.5)*, [https://www.who.int/data/gho/data/indicators/indicator-details/GHO/concentrations-of-fine-particulate-matter-\(pm2-5\)](https://www.who.int/data/gho/data/indicators/indicator-details/GHO/concentrations-of-fine-particulate-matter-(pm2-5)).

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

*Shelley Moore Capito was elected by the people of West Virginia to the United States Senate in 2014 and reelected in 2020. She became the first female Senator in West Virginia's history and, in 2020, was reelected with the largest margin of victory for a Republican in state history.*

*After serving West Virginia's Second Congressional District in the U.S. House of Representatives for 14 years and as a member of the West Virginia House of Delegates for four years prior to that, Senator Capito ran for Senate to be an even stronger voice for the Mountain State. She saw an opportunity to restore order to a Senate stuck in gridlock and believes that today's challenges demand bipartisan solutions and cooperation across the aisle.*

*For the 118th Congress, Senator Capito serves on the Appropriations Committee; the Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee; the Environment and Public Works (EPW) Committee as Ranking Member; and the Rules and Administration Committee. Senator Capito also serves as the Vice Chairman of the Senate Republican Conference.*

*As a member of the Appropriations Committee, Senator Capito has served as chair of the Legislative Branch Subcommittee, the Financial Services and General Government Subcommittee, and the Homeland Security Subcommittee. Senator Capito currently serves as the top Republican on the Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies Appropriations Subcommittee, where she oversees funding across a large range of programs within the U.S. Departments of Labor, Education, Health and Human Services, and other independent agencies. She has been a member of the Appropriations Committee since she became a Senator in 2015.*

*As the top Republican on the EPW Committee, Senator Capito has advocated for policies that protect vital West Virginia energy and manufacturing jobs and encouraged investment in West Virginia's infrastructure. She has been a member of the EPW Committee since she became a Senator in 2015.*

*A lifelong West Virginian, Senator Capito was born in Glen Dale in the Northern Panhandle. She holds a B.S. in zoology from Duke University and a M.Ed. from the University of Virginia. She and her husband, Charles L. Capito, Jr., reside in Charleston. They have three adult children.*





# COLLABORATION IS VITAL IN THE CRUSADE FOR CLIMATE RESILIENCE

By A. Scott Anderson

They bought their tickets in anticipation of a big night and waited in line at the Sondheim Theatre in London. On October 4, 2023, in the midst of the *Les Misérables* performance of “Do You Hear the People Sing?” radical climate change protesters spoiled the playgoers’ evening. The activists stormed the stage and locked themselves to the set. As the audience booed, the curtain came down and the auditorium was cleared. By the time police had arrested the demonstrators, there was insufficient time to resume the play and tickets had to be refunded.

It goes without saying that climate change cannot be solved by such disruptive antics. Instead, global policy leaders and citizens everywhere need to work collaboratively across sectors and constituents if we are going to be able to combat the devastating effects of global warming and climate change by reaching measurable mileposts. Marching together, we can solve difficult, intractable domestic problems and bolster community resilience to the effects of climate change.

*But the Tigers Come at Night, with Their Voices Soft as Thunder*

The threats of global warming, poor air quality, and extreme weather events caused by climate change are urgent challenges to the health of communities, individuals and families, and the economy. As greenhouse gas emissions warm the world, they accelerate evaporation and disrupt weather patterns, hastening glacial melt and evaporation. Land and ocean temperatures are on the rise. Rural communities and low-income communities face unique challenges in responding to climate change and threats of displacement.

Regions, cities, and states also encounter barricades as they work to strengthen their resilience and achieve measurable mileposts. Their intersecting and overlapping jurisdictions, multiple layers of departments, and disparate accountability chains can bog down the implementation of comprehensive resilience plans that effectively serve citizens. But there are opportunities for local elected officials and those in the private sector to work collaboratively to achieve those goals. These domestic policy efforts coupled with free market remedies can have a direct impact on the 71 percent of Americans who reported that their community had experienced an extreme climate-related event in 2022, according to a July 2023 Pew Research Report.<sup>1</sup>

*Somewhere Beyond the Barricade Is There a World You Long to See?*

Longing to see an urgent response, Utah is working to lead out on solutions to the detrimental impacts of climate change. In 2020, community leaders, members of Congress, and business and faith leaders joined together to create the Utah

---

<sup>1</sup> Brian Kennedy et al., *Americans Divided Over Direction of Biden's Climate Change Policies*, Pew Rsch. Ctr. (July 14, 2022), <https://www.pewresearch.org/science/2022/07/14/americans-divided-over-direction-of-bidens-climate-change-policies>.

Climate & Clean Air Compact.<sup>2</sup> It calls for all stakeholders to work together to reach the mileposts of the Utah Roadmap crafted by the Kem C. Gardner Policy Institute, which was created to assist with legislative policymaking to improve air quality and address the causes and impacts of a changing climate.<sup>3</sup>

The compact offers positive solutions with a focus on health and well being, climate and air quality, the economy, technological innovation, rural Utah, and leadership in the Utah Way. Conservative and pragmatic states like Utah can become national leaders in addressing climate solutions. We are regularly convening with various government, municipal, and industry sector leaders, as well as policy advocates to advance important conversations about how the state can be a frontrunner when it comes to bolstering community resiliency and mitigating the potentially devastating impacts of climate change.

### *Will You Join in Our Crusade?*

It takes an army of state and local governments, private sector investors across multiple disciplines, innovation companies, and even philanthropies to accelerate the use of federal funding designed to stimulate resilience to the effects of climate change.

Bipartisan solutions that empower states to better prepare for extreme weather events connect local communities to federal dollars. Solutions like the Promoting Resilient Operations for Transformative, Efficient, and Cost-Saving Transportation (PROTECT) Formula Program funding help states make transportation infrastructure more resilient to future weather events and other natural disasters by focusing on resilience planning and improving existing transportation assets and evacuation routes.

In July 2023, Utah Governor Spencer Cox joined U.S. Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg at the Utah State Capitol to announce \$7.3 billion in formula funding that is helping states and communities better prepare for and respond to extreme weather events like fires, flooding, and extreme temperatures. These funds will strengthen communities across the U.S., especially those in rural areas, and will stimulate job growth while promoting economically equitable solutions.

Public and private alliances are strengthening policy efforts to combat the threats from climate change. Utah Representative John Curtis is leading the Conservative Climate Caucus's work to bring private sector innovation into the equation of federal funding so that innovation and R&D can help lower emissions while also making energy affordable. These free-market solutions can position the United States as the global leader in reducing emissions.

---

<sup>2</sup> Utah Climate & Clean Air Compact, *The Compact*, <https://climateandcleanaircompact.org>.

<sup>3</sup> Kem C. Gardner Pol'y Inst., *The Utah Roadmap: Positive Solutions on Climate and Air Quality* (Jan. 31, 2020), <https://d36oiwf74r1rap.cloudfront.net/wp-content/uploads/TheUtahRoadmap-Feb2020.pdf?x71849>.

Even philanthropies are leaning in to stimulate results. A consortium of large philanthropies — including the Carnegie Corporation of New York, the Open Society Foundations, the Skoll Foundation, the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, and the W.K. Kellogg Foundation — recently launched BuildUs in September 2023.<sup>4</sup> Their fund pool supports the implementation of the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL), and the CHIPS Act. BuildUs grants will be made to partners who are reducing bottlenecks and accelerating state and local efforts to utilize federal investments that promote a transition to clean energy at the state, local and federal levels.

*There Is a Life About to Start when Tomorrow Comes*

Business, government, faith, and civic institutions all care deeply about our climate future and the prospects of children here and around the globe. It is incumbent on us to invest in a collaborative future — to invest our time, energy, and resources to work holistically across industries, sectors, and local, state, and federal government to foster resilience in the face of climate change. Recognizing how much there is to do, we have no time to waste.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

*A. Scott Anderson is President and Chief Executive Officer of Zions Bank. Zions Bank is Utah's oldest financial institution and operates 107 full-service branches throughout Utah and 25 full-service branches in Idaho.*

*Anderson currently serves on several boards of directors, including Intermountain Healthcare, Americans for the Arts Business Committee for the Arts, World Trade Center Utah, and Days of '47 Rodeo. He also serves as Board Chairman of the Orrin G. Hatch Foundation. He has previously chaired boards of the Salt Lake Chamber of Commerce, Utah Sports Commission, and Economic Development Corporation of Utah, and was a director of the Salt Lake City Branch of the Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco.*

*A native of Salt Lake City, Anderson joined Zions Bank in December 1990. He received a bachelor's degree in philosophy and economics from Columbia University. He also received a master's degree in economics and international studies from Johns Hopkins University.*

*Anderson is a leader in the financial services industry and served as chairman of the American Bankers Association (ABA) from 2021-2022. He has also served on the ABA's Banker Council, Communication Committee, and Government Relations Committee, and as a member of the Senior Advisors Group to the President's Council on Year 2000 Conversion in Washington, D.C. He previously served as chairman of the Utah Bankers Association board of directors.*

---

<sup>4</sup> BuildUS, <https://www.build-us.org>.

CONSERVATIVES RECLAIM  
ENVIRONMENTALISM AND  
PUSH FOR ACTION

By Christopher Barnard

### *Introduction*

Conservation is fundamentally conservative. In fact, for many years, Republicans were at the forefront of environmental conservation. President Ulysses S. Grant signed legislation that created the first National Park.<sup>1</sup> President Theodore Roosevelt is praised as the “conservation president” and founding father of the modern National Parks System.<sup>2</sup> President Richard Nixon formed the Environmental Protection Agency and signed the Clean Air Act into law.<sup>3</sup> Ronald Reagan signed the Montreal Protocol, and George H. W. Bush signed key amendments to Nixon’s Clean Air Act.<sup>4</sup>

It is clear that, historically, conservatives understood the importance of protecting the environment for generations to come. Unfortunately, however, in recent decades, conservatives have ceded the discussion on climate change – the environmental challenge of our generation – to those on the Left. The result has been a one-sided climate consensus in Washington, D.C. predicated on top-down federal regulations and mandates. Conservatives rightfully reject these failed policies, which have resulted in unreliable electricity grids and inflated energy prices.<sup>5</sup>

However, the simple act of renouncing the other side’s bad ideas is not enough. Conservatives must offer an alternative course of action and take back these discussions to ensure that America’s abundant and precious natural resources are protected for future generations. This essay covers the growth of the conservative environmental movement and details the conservative approach to solving our most pressing environmental challenge: climate change.

---

<sup>1</sup> Nat’l Park Serv., *Grant and Yellowstone*, <https://www.nps.gov/articles/000/grant-and-yellowstone.htm#:~:text=On%20March%201%2C%201872%2C%20Grant>.

<sup>2</sup> Nat’l Park Serv., *Theodore Roosevelt and the National Park System: Theodore Roosevelt Birthplace National Historic Site*, <https://www.nps.gov/thrb/learn/historyculture/trandthenpsystem.htm>.

<sup>3</sup> Meir Rinde, *Richard Nixon and the Rise of American Environmentalism*, Sci. Hist. Inst. (June 7, 2017), <https://www.sciencehistory.org/stories/magazine/richard-nixon-and-the-rise-of-american-environmentalism>; Richard Nixon, *Remarks on Signing the Clean Air Amendments of 1970* (Dec. 31, 1970), <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-signing-the-clean-air-amendments-1970>.

<sup>4</sup> Ronald Reagan, *Statement on Signing the Montreal Protocol on Ozone-Depleting Substances* (Apr. 5, 1988), <https://www.reaganlibrary.gov/archives/speech/statement-signing-montreal-protocol-ozone-depleting-substances>; U.S. Env’t Prot. Agency, *The Clean Air Act: Highlights of the 1990 Amendments*, <https://www.epa.gov/clean-air-act-overview/clean-air-act-highlights-1990-amendments>.

<sup>5</sup> Ethan Howland, *FERC Commissioners Tell Senators of Major Grid Reliability Challenges, with Some Blaming Markets*, Utility Dive (May 5, 2023), <https://www.utilitydive.com/news/ferc-grid-reliability-senate-energy-hearing/649523>; U.S. Chamber of Commerce Glob. Energy Inst., *2022 Average U.S. Electricity Retail Prices*, <https://www.globalenergyinstitute.org/2022-average-us-electricity-prices>.

### *The Changing Narrative*

Although skepticism about climate change has seemed to some like a defining characteristic of modern conservatism, the narrative has changed significantly in recent years. Today, conservatives across the country acknowledge that climate change is real, is influenced by humans, and needs our attention. Among young adults aged 18-30 who lean conservative, 71 percent believe Republicans should care about climate change. Only 56 percent believe the party already does.<sup>6</sup>

While progress has been made due to mounting pressure from younger generations and a growing number of organizations pushing Republican lawmakers to engage on climate change, there is obviously still work to be done. My organization, the American Conservation Coalition, or ACC, was founded in 2017 to build and mobilize the conservative environmental movement. Over the past six years, we've been at the center of that movement alongside some of our closest partners, including ClearPath, Citizens for Responsible Energy Solutions, and the Conservative Coalition for Climate Solutions. ACC has grown to a membership base of over 30,000 young people nationwide and is the country's largest youth grassroots, conservative environmental organization.

As pressure from the conservative environmental movement grows, political leaders on the Right have reengaged on this issue. In 2021, twenty-five Republican House Members – including current Committee Chairs Bruce Westerman, Cathy McMorris Rodgers, Frank Lucas, and Glenn Thompson – gathered in Salt Lake City to figure out a path to address climate change.<sup>7</sup> Later that year, Representative John Curtis created the Conservative Climate Caucus, now the fourth-largest caucus in the U.S. House of Representatives with 85 Republican Members.<sup>8</sup> For the last two years, delegations of Republican House Members attended COP26 and COP27 in Scotland and Egypt, respectively, for the first two iterations of the Global Conservative Climate Summit. In the run-up to the 2022 midterms, then-Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy launched an Energy, Climate & Conservation Taskforce to put forth Republican solutions to our environmental problems, and several bipartisan pieces of energy and environmental legislation have crossed the finish line in recent years.<sup>9</sup> To anyone paying attention, it is clear that conservatives have taken their seat at the table on climate change.

---

<sup>6</sup> Am. Conservation Coal., *Young Americans Still Searching for Real Climate Leadership, According to ACC Poll* (Feb. 24, 2022), <https://www.acc.eco/youth-views-on-climate-and-environment>.

<sup>7</sup> Josh Siegel, *House Republicans Held Secret Climate Summit in Utah*, Wash. Exam. (Feb. 24, 2021), <https://www.washingtonexaminer.com/policy/energy/house-republicans-secret-climate-summit-utah>.

<sup>8</sup> Congressman John Curtis, *Conservative Climate Caucus*, <https://curtis.house.gov/conservative-climate-caucus>.

<sup>9</sup> Josh Siegel, *House Republicans to Introduce Climate Change Strategy with Eye on Midterms*, Politico (June 1, 2021), <https://www.politico.com/news/2022/06/01/house-republicans-to-introduce-climate-change-strategy-with-eye-on-midterms-00036481>.

### *The Conservative Approach*

The conservative approach to climate change champions innovation and economic prosperity with the idea that what's truly good for the planet is also good for people. It is defined by hope and optimism rather than alarmism and fear. By acknowledging there is no silver-bullet solution, we have crafted an agenda based on human ingenuity, common sense action, and collaboration across individuals, communities, the private sector, and governments.

The Climate Commitment<sup>10</sup> puts these principles into practice with six pillars:

1. *Innovate*: Unleash American innovation to create clean and affordable technologies for all.
2. *Streamline*: Cut red tape to build our clean energy future.
3. *Compete*: Empower Americans to build and export the cleanest products in the world.
4. *Unlock*: Free American resources to protect energy independence and build our clean energy future.
5. *Conserve*: Take good care of America's natural heritage.
6. *Protect*: Ensure clean air, clean water, and resilient infrastructure for all Americans.

ACC's advocacy during the 118th Congress stems from these six pillars and hones in on four more specific policy areas: permitting reform, nuclear energy, critical minerals, and nature-based climate solutions. To unleash clean energy's full potential in this country, we must modernize and streamline our environmental permitting processes. Similarly, nuclear energy provides nearly half our nation's carbon-free electricity, yet we continue to shut existing nuclear power plants down and put roadblocks in front of potential new construction.<sup>11</sup> To reverse this trend, Congress must direct the Nuclear Regulatory Commission to streamline its licensing process while also securing domestic uranium supply chains. To ensure a reliable supply of critical minerals—the building blocks of the clean energy transition needed for solar panels, wind turbines, electric vehicle batteries, and more—we must fast-track critical mineral mining projects domestically, build a stockpile of critical minerals and rare earth elements, and partner with our allies. Lastly, Congress must take nature-based climate solutions' role seriously by promoting active forest management such as prescribed burns and mechanical thinning, empowering farmers to use climate-friendly agriculture practices, and establishing a carbon market framework.

---

<sup>10</sup> *The Climate Commitment*, <https://www.theclimatecommitment.com/#ideas>.

<sup>11</sup> U.S. Dep't of Energy, Office of Nuclear Energy, *5 Fast Facts About Nuclear Energy*, <https://www.energy.gov/ne/articles/5-fast-facts-about-nuclear-energy>.



### *Conclusion*

By embracing their role as stewards of the environment and advocates for economic prosperity, conservatives are demonstrating that tackling climate change is not only compatible with their principles, but that we—not the Left—are best equipped to solve this challenge. Conservatives have the tools needed to pave the way for a future where economic growth and environmental protection go hand in hand, and now, it's imperative that we use them. Conservatives must lead the way to a cleaner, healthier, and more prosperous future by stepping off the sidelines and proudly advocating for conservative solutions to climate change.

#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

*Christopher Barnard is President of the American Conservation Coalition (ACC). He received a master's degree in international relations from the London School of Economics and resides in Washington, D.C., with his wife, Hayley. While in the U.K., Barnard founded the British Conservation Alliance and was active in U.K. politics for several years. He co-published the book Green Market Revolution, which has been translated into five languages and has a foreword by Lord Daniel Hannan.*

*Barnard runs the Grasstops Department at ACC, where he manages ACC's government affairs, external partnerships, and corporate relations. He serves on the Republican National Committee Youth Advisory Council and frequently appears in national news outlets. His writing focuses on how America can win the clean energy arms race and compete with China in the 21st century. Barnard's work has been published by the Wall Street Journal, The Independent, the Daily Telegraph, National Review, the Washington Examiner, and many other leading publications. He has spoken at climate conferences in more than ten countries.*



# A POLICY CLIMATE IN NEED OF CHANGE

By U.S. Senator John Barrasso, M.D. (R-Wyoming)

Climate change is a serious challenge that requires a serious strategy. America's approach must be fact-based and tailored to help, not hurt, our economy. Setting targets that cannot be met and lack strong public support helps no one.

Republicans recognize that climate change poses risks. The challenge is addressing those risks without damaging our economy or punishing American families. Our policy responses must encourage innovation and maintain America's competitiveness and geopolitical leadership.

The Biden administration is pushing an ill-considered energy "transition" that would eliminate the source of 80 percent of American energy by 2050, regardless of cost. The administration is attempting to meet commitments under the Paris Climate Agreement. That agreement permits China and India to dramatically increase their emissions while the U.S. cuts its own.

It's no wonder the White House refuses to send the agreement to the Senate for a vote. They rightly fear it would be rejected.

In all the debate about the energy transition, the scale of the challenge is rarely discussed. The administration should start squaring with the American people about the economic cost of the transition they are pushing. Extreme cuts in U.S. emissions will be neither easy nor cheap, nor will they ultimately address the underlying challenge of climate change.

At the United Nations Framework Convention, the United States agreed with other parties to cut global emissions 43 percent below the 2019 level by 2030. To achieve that, the world would have to cut or avoid about 22 billion metric tons—or gigatons—of emissions.

To replace the total amount of electricity generated by typical natural gas-combined cycle plants producing one gigaton of carbon dioxide would require more than 250,000 2.5-megawatt wind turbines. That would use up a land area nearly 2.5 times the size of Wyoming.

Replacing those same natural gas plants with nuclear power would mean building 280 one-gigawatt nuclear reactors—almost three times the number in operation in the United States today.

That is clearly not happening in just over six years.

At its most fundamental level, reducing greenhouse gas emissions is a technology challenge. America cannot regulate or tax its way to lower emissions.

Our focus should be on bringing down the cost of alternate energy technologies through American innovation. Blocking access to traditional energy

sources and rushing ahead with technologies that are not yet reliable or affordable is a recipe for failure.

American innovation is the best in the world. The shale revolution provides an example of this truth. When a business finds a new technology that works better than an existing one, it will use it. Once alternate technologies can compete on price, reliability, and scalability, the range of possible policy options broadens accordingly.

Trying to force a “transition” to more expensive and less reliable technologies brings massive costs. The European Union has wreaked havoc on its own economy. Its expensive climate policies are hurting families and ruining its economic competitiveness. The EU’s draconian approach has also undermined its stated goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Faced with energy scarcity and higher costs, many Europeans have switched to more carbon-intensive fuels, including trash and wood, for their power and heating needs.

Thanks to the shale revolution, Americans pay much less for electricity and natural gas than Europeans. American manufacturers have a significant competitive advantage. Increasing natural gas production has also enabled us to reduce emissions dramatically while improving our nation’s energy and economic security.

The U.S. should continue using our abundant and affordable traditional fuels as cleanly and efficiently as possible without driving up costs for American families. We should not limit ourselves to a narrow range of politically favored technologies.

We also must ensure U.S. climate policy does not give our adversaries a geopolitical edge. The shale revolution supercharged U.S. oil and gas production, reducing our exposure to the OPEC cartel and giving the United States greater geopolitical leverage. Now, the headlong rush to wind, solar, and electric vehicles threatens to make the U.S. more dependent on China and Russia than it ever was on OPEC.

A typical offshore wind turbine requires over 33 thousand pounds of copper, zinc, manganese, rare earths, and nickel per megawatt of electricity. That is twelve times the minerals required for natural gas generation. An electric vehicle requires over 440 pounds of minerals, compared to roughly 70 for a conventional vehicle.

China dominates the cobalt, copper, lithium, graphite, and rare earths supply chain. It’s a source of copper, cobalt, and rare earths. Both China and Russia play a large role in the nickel market.

The United States currently imports anywhere from 35 to nearly 100 percent of these key energy minerals from our adversaries. America has many of these critical minerals sitting in the ground at home, but President Biden won't allow us to access them.

It takes about ten years to get a federal mining permit approved. The process can work more quickly, but the Biden administration uses mineral withdrawals, environmental regulations, and sue-and-settle tactics to kill these projects. That's one reason I'm pushing for real permitting reform.

We cannot afford to let the United States slip back into energy and resource dependency. Our nation is insecure with an energy agenda that makes China wealthier and American families poorer.

Policymakers should support innovation so alternative energy and technologies are as reliable and affordable as current energy and technologies. This empowers consumers to decide the option that's best for them.

In the future, our country will need more, not less, home-grown energy. That includes oil, natural gas, and coal, as well as nuclear, wind, hydropower, geothermal, hydrogen, and solar. We will need it all. Through continued technological improvements, we can make each of these technologies cleaner, more efficient, and more cost-effective.

Policymakers must also stop pretending that any single energy source is "perfect." Our policies must allow for considerations like cost, reliability, ease of access, simplicity of storage, environmental impact, and more. To the greatest extent possible, our laws should encourage innovation—and allow consumers to decide the right option for them.

Those are the key pillars of a Republican climate policy that Americans can rally around.

#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

*Senator John Barrasso was sworn into the United States Senate in 2007. He previously represented the people of Natrona County in the Wyoming State Senate from 2003-2007. Senator Barrasso is the third-ranking member in Senate Republican leadership as Chairman of the Senate Republican Conference. He serves on committees directly impacting Wyoming's economy, energy interests, public lands, national parks, and trade. In addition to other committee assignments, Senator Barrasso is the Ranking Member of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee. He is known by many as Wyoming's Doctor. During his 24 years as an orthopedic surgeon, Senator Barrasso served as President of the Wyoming Medical Society and was named Wyoming Physician of the Year. He has three children—Peter, Emma, and Hadley. He and his wife, Bobbi, live in Casper.*

**GOP CAN PLAY A KEY ROLE  
ON CLIMATE POLICY**

By Neil Chatterjee

Republicans need to have more ambitious policy approaches on climate change. This is true in part because climate change is beginning to exact costs to the American public and consumers. But Republicans also need viable policy solutions to counter often irresponsible policies Democrats have advanced.

Thoughtful conservatives on energy policy generally understand that the transition toward lowering emissions through cleaner energy can, and must, be accomplished while maintaining affordable energy costs, energy reliability, and U.S. energy security. Only under these conditions will consumers, businesses, and voters consistently provide long-term political support for the necessary transition toward lower emissions energy.

But right now in our push to rapidly decarbonize we have taken our eyes off energy reliability, and both parties are responsible. The political left is so focused on meeting emissions reduction targets that they have swept reliability and security concerns under the rug, risking both policy and political backlashes. Some on the political right, in turn, are using reliability to try to slow down or kill the energy transition. We need a sober-minded, rational approach to moving forward with the energy transition responsibly.

The good news is that many policy solutions are available that can yield tremendous progress in reducing emissions and energy costs, while also improving reliability and security, if we act on them. The most important of these include:

- *Achieving Energy Permitting Reform* – It's too hard to build energy projects in America today. Bureaucratic and regulatory hurdles at the federal, state, and local level have slowed down the much-needed buildout of new energy projects and infrastructure. Thousands of energy projects are awaiting approval in every region around the country. Ironically, in the false name of environmental protection under 1970s environmental laws, key projects on wind, solar, electricity transmission, natural gas pipelines, and many other subjects are being routinely delayed by years, greatly increasing the costs of project development, which of course are eventually passed on to consumers.

During my time as Chair of Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, I explained that you could not tie up the natural gas approval process in red tape and legal obstacles and then not expect those same hurdles to apply to building high-voltage powerlines. The irony is that historical opponents of building fossil fuel energy infrastructure are now the loudest proponents of building electricity transmission to get clean energy onto the grid, but find their own delaying playbook is being used against them.



But we can change this. There is a deal to be had on permitting reform that, yes, will lead to the expedited build-out of some natural gas infrastructure in the short-term, but that can also facilitate the electric grid expansion that is necessary to propel the lower-emissions energy transition for the long-term. If both sides will just compromise, America can begin to build again and we will all be better off.

- *Deploying U.S. Natural Gas Strategically* – America is going to need natural gas for the foreseeable future to maintain domestic electricity reliability. And we are going to need gas to achieve energy security for ourselves and our allies. We should have clear plans to do both.

On the security side, U.S. liquified natural gas exports are a win, win, win. These projects create jobs and economic growth at home. They provide our allies with an alternative to Russian gas. And they displace dirtier sources of fuel around the world, which can actually lower global carbon emissions.

At home, we must recognize that natural gas is a remarkable fuel; it's affordable, abundant, safe, and easily transportable. Its downside is it can emit both methane through leakage and carbon when burned. Our industry is already making huge strides in reducing leakage of methane, which will significantly cut the lifecycle greenhouse emissions from natural gas. But we must also make advancements in carbon capture from gas while mitigating emissions. I serve on the Bipartisan Policy Center's Future of Natural Gas Policy Initiative to help bring both political sides together to work towards a pragmatic natural gas agenda.

- *Commercializing Carbon Capture Technologies* – A key drawback to natural gas is it emits carbon when burned. If we can make advancements in carbon capture and storage (CCS), including lowering its costs, we can continue to benefit from gas while mitigating emissions. Studies show that we will also need carbon capture technologies, including direct air capture (DAC) of carbon from the atmosphere, to cut overall emissions from difficult-to-mitigate sectors like heavy industry. Right now, leading private sector energy companies are making major investments in both CCS and DAC, prompted in part by federal incentives, with the goal of reducing costs so these technologies can reach a commercial scale. While some on the political left oppose CCS and DAC, most energy experts believe it will be needed. America should be on the vanguard of carbon management, which will allow us to keep energy costs low while maintaining energy reliability.

- *Jumpstarting International Climate Action* – Left-leaning climate advocates have failed to compel reductions by our competitors, especially China, whose annual emissions are far larger than the U.S.’s. China’s yearly emissions are in fact now one-third of the global total and still growing. America has been cutting our emissions for many years now. But unless other major emitters also do so international climate change goals, and climate protection, will be much harder to achieve.

Some Republican members of Congress are considering policies to place a fee on high-emissions, imported goods from China and other nations whose economies have much higher emissions intensities than ours. A so-called “border carbon adjustment mechanism” would enable America to leverage our lower carbon intensity to our advantage, benefiting U.S. producers and incentivizing China and other economies to finally cut their emissions.

Of course, there are additional policies that may be helpful in reducing emissions in a way that is compatible with U.S. energy security, reliability, and affordability. Astounding innovations in dozens of new energy technologies—including modular nuclear power, advanced geothermal energy, electricity storage, and many more—hold the promise of allowing America to reduce our emissions deeply while maintaining low cost and reliability. We can deal with the climate issue, but we must do so using a balanced policy and political approach to be successful.

#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

*The Honorable Neil Chatterjee is a former Commissioner and Chairman of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC). While at FERC, Chatterjee championed several strategic initiatives, including streamlining and improving FERC’s liquified natural gas application review and approval process, bolstering power grid reliability and resilience, and boosting renewable resources’ ability to compete in regional power markets. He also broke down market barriers for new technologies, particularly low-carbon technologies. He has advocated for harnessing technology to mitigate physical and cyber threats to critical energy infrastructure.*

*Before his time at FERC, Chatterjee served as an advisor to Senator Mitch McConnell (R-KY), where he aided in the passage of major energy, highway, and agriculture legislation. He also worked as a principal in government relations for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association. He began his career as a staff member on the House Committee on Ways and Means.*

*Chatterjee currently works as a senior advisor in the energy regulatory group at Hogan Lovells, as an industry advisor to Kohlberg Kravis Roberts & Co. (KKR), and as a senior advisor to the Climate Leadership Council. He serves on several corporate and nonprofit boards, including the Bipartisan Policy Center and Deploy US.*

# REFRAMING THE NARRATIVE FOR A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

By Carine S. Clark

In today's world, the conversation around climate change is often a cause for division along partisan lines. However, it is essential to recognize that addressing climate change isn't solely a green issue; it's also a financial and security imperative. I was raised with a strong sense of patriotism as the daughter of Colonel Roger Strom, who served as a decorated Colonel and Brigade Commander with an honored military career. I spent much of my childhood in Germany, where I witnessed firsthand how a country with limited resources had no choice but to innovate to achieve energy independence. My career in the tech industry has also shown me the incredible power of innovation that humans have when they are motivated to seek solutions to complex problems. I believe that we, as Americans, are on the cusp of some important moments regarding our independence from foreign energy sources.

The time has come for conservatives to boldly redefine our energy narrative. While the United States may not confront the same resource scarcity that has compelled innovation in other nations, we must steer our course toward energy independence to protect and enhance our national security. Just as our forefathers sought freedom from monarchs across the ocean to flourish as a society, we must now strive for independence from oligarchs worldwide. Until we achieve our energy independence, we will remain vulnerable to the whims of global energy markets, geopolitical instability, and the staggering economic toll of oil imports. Our nation's security and prosperity demand no less than our unwavering commitment to this cause.

The impact of recent global events like the emerging war in Israel and Russia's attack on Ukraine serve as a stark warning to the United States. They underscore the importance of becoming energy-independent through renewables and reducing our reliance on potentially hostile nations for our energy needs. Here are some thoughts on what we, as conservatives, can do to secure a more independent future.

### *Decentralizing the Power Grid for National Security*

The centralized architecture of our power grid presents a significant vulnerability, as a single point of failure could disrupt our entire nation. This fragility exposes us to risks from both natural disasters, such as storms and earthquakes, and cyber threats. We must embark on a path toward decentralization to enhance our national security. This journey will require substantial investments in smart grid technologies, distributed energy resources, and microgrids.

The good news is that this is already happening in states and local governments nationwide. However, many of these programs only generate a drop in the bucket compared to what they could with our participation. For example, consider community solar programs or net metering policies that incentivize businesses and consumers to invest in solar to receive credits towards their own

solar bill. Why not offer more substantial cash incentives that allow them to invest more and get a significant cash return on their investments? Imagine being able to pay for your retirement or your kid's college while at the same time contributing to a more secure, stable, and sustainable power grid.

### *Fixing Reliability Issues with Aging Infrastructure*

Our aging energy infrastructure, with transmission lines averaging over 25 years old and many components even older, is vulnerable to outages, cyber attacks, and extreme weather.<sup>1</sup> We need comprehensive upgrades to address this, including improved transmission lines, technology, transformers, smart grid advancements, and expanded microgrids and renewables.<sup>2</sup> Each state is already prioritizing and allocating the \$62 billion from the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act,<sup>3</sup> and if we don't participate, our constituents will be left out of the conversation. States are already utilizing funds to advance their energy infrastructure. For instance, Texas is actively developing new transmission lines for renewables,<sup>4</sup> while New York,<sup>5</sup> Illinois,<sup>6</sup> and Ohio<sup>7</sup> are expanding their commitment to solar and wind power. These initiatives represent a trajectory towards a more sustainable future that's unstoppable.

However, the beauty of this endeavor lies in our ability to shape its course. By joining in, we contribute to the success of these projects and ensure that they align with our values and aspirations. Embracing renewable energy allows us to make these initiatives even better, more sustainable, and tailored to our needs. It's an opportunity to be at the forefront of progress and hold these projects accountable to the highest standards, ensuring they benefit our communities and the environment.

---

<sup>1</sup> Tim McLaughlin, *Creaky U.S. Power Grid Threatens Progress on Renewables, EVs*, Reuters (May 12, 2022), <https://www.reuters.com/investigates/special-report/usa-renewables-electric-grid>.

<sup>2</sup> U.S. Dep't of Energy, *Grid Modernization and the Smart Grid*, <https://www.energy.gov/oe/grid-modernization-and-smart-grid>.

<sup>3</sup> U.S. Dep't of Energy, *DOE Optimizes Structure to Implement \$62 Billion in Clean Energy Investments From Bipartisan Infrastructure Law* (Feb. 9, 2022), <https://www.energy.gov/articles/doe-optimizes-structure-implement-62-billion-clean-energy-investments-bipartisan>.

<sup>4</sup> Ams. for a Clean Energy Grid, *Texas as a National Model for Bringing Clean Energy to the Grid* (Oct. 13, 2022), <https://cleanenergygrid.org/texas-national-model-bringing-clean-energy-grid>.

<sup>5</sup> The Nature Conservancy, *Accelerating Large-Scale Wind and Solar Energy in New York* (Oct. 2017), <https://www.nature.org/content/dam/tnc/nature/en/documents/accelerating-large-scale-wind-and-solar-energy-in-new-york.pdf>.

<sup>6</sup> Ill. Dep't of Commerce, *Reimagining Energy and Vehicles (REV) Illinois Program*, <https://dceo.illinois.gov/businesshelp/rev.html>.

<sup>7</sup> The Nature Conservancy, *Creating a Clean Energy Future in Ohio* (Nov. 2, 2022), <https://www.nature.org/en-us/about-us/where-we-work/united-states/ohio/stories-in-ohio/creating-clean-energy-future>.

### *Investing in Smart Renewable Energy*

Investing in renewable energy sources, such as solar, thermal, and wind, alongside smart grid technologies and emerging storage systems will bolster grid capacity and enhance its stability, particularly during fluctuations. Germany<sup>8</sup> and Australia<sup>9</sup> are compelling models of how renewable energy can augment existing power grids today. Germany has effectively blended energy storage, fossil fuels, and renewables. In 2022, Germany achieved a significant milestone, with renewables contributing 46 percent of its power generation. Meanwhile, Australia is actively constructing a new transmission line to seamlessly integrate renewable energy sources across the country. These examples underscore the transformative potential of renewable energy in fortifying grid infrastructure and advancing energy independence.

### *Incentivizing Responsible Energy Consumption*

Promoting energy efficiency is a highly effective strategy for reducing energy consumption and enhancing energy independence. It involves implementing policies and programs that reward consumers and businesses for solid sustainability practices. For example, state governments can contribute by establishing rigorous energy efficiency standards for new construction projects and incentivizing consumers to use solar and other sustainable sources. According to a recent PEW Research study, 67 percent of Republicans favor a business tax credit for developing carbon capture technologies, 70 percent support more solar panel farms, and 60 percent favor more wind farms.<sup>10</sup> In general, 67 percent of U.S. adults across the board support prioritizing the development of alternative energy sources such as wind, solar, and hydrogen power over increasing the production of fossil fuel energy sources. We all want change, but we are letting semantics get in the way of progress.

Just last year, Governor Ron DeSantis of Florida vetoed a bill that would have removed incentives for rooftop solar power because of surging gas prices.<sup>11</sup> This

---

<sup>8</sup> Int'l Trade Admin., *Germany – Country Commercial Guide*, <https://www.trade.gov/country-commercial-guides/germany-energy>.

<sup>9</sup> Nathaniel Gronewold, *To Boost Renewable Energy, Australia Looks to Water and Gravity*, *Sci. Am.* (June 18, 2020), <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/to-boost-renewable-energy-australia-looks-to-water-and-gravity>.

<sup>10</sup> Brian Kennedy et al., *Majorities of Americans Prioritize Renewable Energy, Back Steps to Address Climate Change*, Pew Rsch. Ctr. (June 28, 2023), <https://www.pewresearch.org/science/2023/06/28/majorities-of-americans-prioritize-renewable-energy-back-steps-to-address-climate-change>.

<sup>11</sup> Brian Kahn, *Ron DeSantis Vetoes Rooftop Solar Bill Because the Gas Prices Are Too Damn High*, *Protocol* (Apr. 28, 2022), <https://www.protocol.com/bulletins/ron-desantis-veto-rooftop-solar#:~:text=But%20on%20Wednesday%2C%20lightning%20struck,prices%20surging%20around%20the%20globe>.

action recognized the pivotal role of solar power in advancing energy independence. Additionally, Representative David Valadao of California, a co-founder of the Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Caucus, introduced legislation to promote solar and other renewable energy sources, underlining the importance of diversifying energy options for a more secure and sustainable future.<sup>12</sup>

While it may seem that the Republican party is divided over renewable energy, it's crucial to recognize that most of us don't believe renewable energy betrays conservative values, as it fosters innovation and job creation while aligning with the economic freedom and self-reliance principles that conservatives hold dear. Making this great nation as strong and independent as possible has always been at the forefront of the Republican agenda, and leaving this world better off than we found it is the goal of every parent, as it always has been for me. As a newly minted grandmother of two adorable little humans, I feel a renewed responsibility to ensure my grandchildren are afforded the same rights and opportunities I have been blessed with. If the air happens to be a bit fresher and the water a bit cleaner, well then. That's okay, too.

#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

*Carine S. Clark is a three-time president and CEO of high-growth tech companies, specializing in helping companies scale. Her reputation as a data-driven marketing executive at Novell, Altiris, and Symantec paved the way for her to lead Allegiance, MartizCX, and Banyan as president and CEO. She currently serves as the Chief Innovation Officer at Lumio HX.*

*Clark is an active angel and venture investor in SaaS software companies and supports entrepreneurs in the U.S., Latin America, Israel, and Australia. She serves as the chair of the Utah Governor's Office of Economic Opportunity and on the executive board of Silicon Slopes, a non-profit helping Utah's tech community thrive. She is also the executive chairman for Domo and an independent board director for Nelnet. She serves on the Salt Lake City Olympic Bid Committee and works with every major university in Utah to help students prepare for tech jobs.*

*Clark has received numerous awards, including the EY Entrepreneur of The Year® Award in the Utah Region and Utah Business Magazine's CEO of the Year. In 2021, she was named Outstanding Director for a Public Company by the National Association of Corporate Directors Utah Chapter. Clark earned a bachelor's degree in organizational communications and an MBA from Brigham Young University.*

---

<sup>12</sup> Press Release, Congressman David G. Valadao, *Valadao, Spanberger Introduce Bill to Lower Energy Costs by Strengthening the Rural Energy for America Program* (July 27, 2023), <https://valadao.house.gov/news/documentsingle.aspx?DocumentID=789>.





# WHY WE NEED TO TALK ABOUT THE CLIMATE

By U.S. Representative John R. Curtis (R-Utah)

It is a misnomer in politics that conservative values are incompatible with efforts to protect our climate and environment.\* This oversimplified portrayal has left a void, paving the way for extreme proposals like the Green New Deal. To challenge and change this narrative, conservatives need to engage in the climate discussion and demonstrate that we have solutions to reduce emissions that will not only keep us energy-independent but also make us energy-dominant, all while maintaining affordable and reliable power.

Living in Utah, one develops a profound appreciation for the environment and an inherent desire to protect the environment and leave the earth better for our children and grandchildren. This sentiment is not exclusive to the Beehive State. Conservatives across the nation share these values.

I founded the Conservative Climate Caucus (CCC) because conservatives need a united voice in the climate space. The CCC has clear objectives and advocates for a balanced approach to achieving energy independence and dominance through practical, cost-effective solutions. These solutions seek to reduce emissions without sacrificing the affordability and reliability of energy.

One significant challenge that hinders the advancement of energy projects is the bureaucratic maze of the permitting process. By simplifying this process and reducing hurdles, we can expedite the development of a diverse range of energy projects. This approach aligns with the objectives of both conservatives and liberals, who, despite differences in their approach to energy solutions, share a common goal of advancing energy projects.

In that spirit, CCC delegations have attended the last two United Nations Climate Conferences. Just last year, the Caucus presented a panel at the U.S. pavilion, met with President Biden's climate envoy, and received praise at the closing dinner filled with worldwide dignitaries. This year, another delegation will travel to the conference in the United Arab Emirates.

We've learned through these international meetings how destructive one-sided policymaking can be. Europe is turning on their coal plants as they shut down nuclear ones. Energy prices in the U.K. exceed £1,000 per month for residential and business customers.

The United States cannot not go down this path.

---

\* Representative Curtis's essay was received in 2023 before his official declaration of candidacy for the United States Senate. As a 501(c)(3), the Orrin G. Hatch Foundation does not endorse political candidates and the publication of this essay should not be construed as such.

Republicans must be engaged in permitting reform. Whether you want to see a next-generation nuclear plant built in your lifetime or a solar wind farm built in rural Arizona, we can only get it done with permitting reform. If we want to see balanced and diverse sources of energy, the first step is simple: remove the red tape and duplicative reviews our laws currently require.

For example, during my time as Mayor of Provo City, a businessman wanted to extract resources in Provo Canyon. Many in the community, including myself, balked at the idea. So, what did we do? Instead of creating endless litigation to slow-roll the process, we bought the land and turned it into a conservation area. We made clear what we wanted and acted. We need to do the same on a national scale and ensure companies clearly understand project investments.

Take the Atlantic Coast Pipeline, for example. The project was first proposed in 2013 to deliver natural gas up the East Coast from North Carolina. For years, it faced lawsuits until the Supreme Court finally ruled in favor of the utility. What happened? So much time had passed that the utility deemed the project financially unfeasible and canceled it two days later, selling the remnants to an upstream middleman.

Although the CCC doesn't endorse legislation, it plays a crucial role in educating and preparing Republicans to engage in meaningful climate discussions. Of note is H.R. 1, passed out of the House last year, which included the BUILDER Act. This Act is a notable step towards fostering dialogue on permitting reform, setting the stage for a broader discussion on energy and environmental policies. However, without more reform, the vision of an affordable, reliable, and clean energy future remains tenuous.

The CCC serves as a platform for Republicans to engage in constructive climate discourse, bridging the perceived ideological gap between conservatism and climate action. By promoting practical solutions and fostering bipartisan dialogue on this critical issue, we can collaboratively work towards addressing environmental challenges. This approach can help preserve our cherished natural landscapes for future generations and ensure economic stability and energy affordability for our nation.

#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

*Representative John R. Curtis proudly represents Utah's Third Congressional District. He has passed 15 pieces of legislation into law since he was first elected in November 2017. His work covers numerous topics, such as improving public lands management, combatting human trafficking, reducing burdensome regulations on small businesses, streamlining energy policy, and more. Representative Curtis serves on the Energy and Commerce Committee, as Vice*

*Chair of the Energy, Climate and Grid Security Subcommittee, and as a member of the Communications and Technology Subcommittee. On the Natural Resources Committee, he serves as Vice Chair of the Federal Lands Subcommittee and is a member of the Energy and Mineral Resources Subcommittee.*

*As the founder of the Conservative Climate Caucus, Representative Curtis has earned an international reputation for his work on American energy solutions that unleash U.S. clean fuels, bolster the U.S. economy, strengthen our national security, make America energy-independent, and reduce global pollution. He believes America should not just be energy-independent, but energy-dominant.*

*Before coming to Congress, Representative Curtis was a small business owner. He served as the Mayor of Provo City for eight years. As Mayor, he was recognized as a Silicon Slopes Community Hero, received Utah Valley University's Civic Innovator Award, and was named Person of the Year by Utah Valley Magazine. Representative Curtis has been married to his wife, Sue, for 41 years. They have six children and 16 grandchildren.*

# CLIMATE CHANGE POLICY MUST RETURN TO REALITY

By Peter R. Huntsman

In the current policy, political, and business arenas, discussion around climate change has morphed into opposition to natural resource extraction. This manifests itself in the idea that the world can somehow “transition” away from fossil fuels and their derivative materials, including chemicals, and somehow maintain our way of life. Until the advent of new technology or a massive expansion of nuclear power, this is simply untrue and not physically possible. To believe so is both naïve and dangerous. Serious countries and people understand this reality, none more so than J.P. Morgan Chase & Co. Chairman and CEO Jamie Dimon, who told the U.S. Congress in September 2022 that stopping capital investment in fossil fuel development would be “the road to hell for America.”

One of the biggest threats to American power, security, and prosperity is the belief that we can choose *not* to extract our natural resources and convert them into the materials that enable our citizenry to thrive. Since the beginning of recorded history, human beings and nation-states have used natural resources to survive, prosper, trade, and project power. This has been an invariable part of human nature and will always be so.

Until relatively recently, the notion that we could eliminate fossil fuels while still sustaining modern society was mostly a fringe idea and dismissed by serious leaders in government and industry. Over the last two decades, as seemingly well-intentioned policy proposals developed to attempt to manage an ever-changing climate, anti-fossil fuel extraction policy has become normalized in Europe and, more recently, in the United States. Many governments have organized themselves around stopping natural resource extraction in the name of reducing carbon dioxide emissions to “net zero.” In the business community, many companies have made “commitments” that may (or may not) come to reality in less than three decades.

If the goal of government and business is to reduce greenhouse gas emissions across society, government policy and regulation should be calibrated to *increase* natural resource extraction and chemical manufacturing more efficiently and productively. It is the chemical sector that develops the molecules that allow individuals and society collectively to lower their emissions. A vibrant chemical industry means it is within our ability to lower emissions, cut energy costs, and improve lives.

Every day, scientists and engineers in the American chemical sector go to work in laboratories across the country and aim to improve existing molecules and develop new ones. When commercially viable, laboratory innovation moves to manufacturing plants and into the marketplace. While abstract to the average person, molecular innovation ultimately manifests itself in lighter airplanes and cars, longer-lasting clothes, stronger building materials, and larger crop yields. Human lives are enriched and lengthened through chemical sector innovation.

This is evident in almost every sector across the economy. In the aerospace sector, fossil fuel-derived carbon composite airplanes fly longer distances using less fuel than their aluminum predecessors. Automobiles are constructed using carbon fiber material rather than steel as in years past. Modern homes include insulation materials that create a building envelope, securing the valuable hot and cold air inside the home. The world population recently reached 8 billion people and, for the most part, everyone has access to food. The mass starvation we witnessed as recently as the 1980s in sub-Saharan Africa is virtually gone. This is a new phenomenon in human history and has been made possible only by chemical fertilizer and cold chain storage.

I am increasingly concerned that many government and business leaders lack an understanding of how things are made. In the post-Cold War era of globalization, the United States underwent a low-level form of deindustrialization as the appeal of cheap labor and growth markets in Asia pushed supply chains out of North America. Two examples of this trend in the 1990s and 2000s were the Pennsylvania steel industry and textiles in North Carolina. Wall Street became the highest-paying sector in the 1990s and 2000s. It was then followed by Silicon Valley and the tech boom. Quite simply, “making things” went out of vogue because it was done “out of sight and out of mind.”

Together, we must return to a basic understanding of how things are made and ensure such an understanding is the bedrock of climate change policy. The United States, with its combination of freedom, capitalism, scientific inquiry, deep capital markets, legal protection, and entrepreneurial spirit, possesses the power to solve humanity’s problems. As the geopolitical tides churn and countries reassess their priorities in a more dangerous world, regionalized supply chains will take precedence. Government policy around natural resources, self-sufficiency, and manufacturing will return to the forefront of policymaking. Industrial policy, regulatory decisions, and capital expenditures made today by government and business leaders will impact America and the world for generations. We don’t need to look far to see the damaging impact of bad public policy around natural resources, energy, chemicals, and material innovation.

History shows that such policy decisions determine the fate of nations and societies.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

*Peter R. Huntsman is Chairman, President, and CEO of Huntsman Corporation, a publicly traded global manufacturer and marketer of differentiated and specialty chemicals with 2022 revenues of approximately \$8 billion. Huntsman Corporation operates over 60 manufacturing, R&D, and operations facilities in approximately 30 countries and employs approximately 7,000 associates.*

*In addition, Huntsman is the Chairman and CEO of the Huntsman Cancer Foundation (HCF). HCF raises funds and supports the ongoing research, treatment, and educational programs of the world-renowned Huntsman Cancer Institute. He is also CEO of the Huntsman Foundation, a private foundation focused on cancer care, mental health, homelessness, and other projects to improve society.*

*Huntsman serves on various boards and councils, including the American Chemistry Council; the European Chemical Industry Council; the Memorial Hermann Health Systems Board; the Beaumont Foundation; the Cynthia Woods Mitchell Pavilion Board; and the Interfaith of The Woodlands Community Clinic Board and Board of Advisors. He and his wife are the parents of eight children and have 18 grandchildren.*



**ANOTHER PERSPECTIVE:  
ESG AND IMPACT INVESTING ADDRESS  
SOCIETIES BIGGEST CHALLENGES**

By Jim Sorenson

For 25 years my family and I enjoyed coming to a beach property we owned in southern California.\* We loved the year-round moderate temperatures and ocean environment in contrast to the dry desert climate of our home in Salt Lake City. Over the past 15 years the beach gradually receded. Some time ago I read environmental studies that predicted these changes due in part to the rise of the sea level because of climate change and considered selling the property at that time. I chose to ignore the data. The trend continued and as the ocean was now approaching our house and the expansive beach we once enjoyed was gone, I made the decision to sell. Unfortunately, property values had declined significantly since the time I first became aware of the data as a result of the receding beach, and I lost money I would have made had I sold earlier. Three weeks after the sale closed, a storm brought ocean water into the home.

Around the same time this was happening, one of our fund managers made the decision to divest of a popular and stable stock, Boeing. The divestment decision was made based on ESG data indicating safety shortcuts and other changes affecting employee morale at the company. Shortly thereafter, the 737 Max accidents started occurring. When the dust had cleared and the facts were known around the poor decision making at Boeing, the stock had suffered significant losses. Fortunately, my portfolio was not affected because of the fiduciary diligence of my fund manager in taking ESG data into account on my behalf.

These are personal examples of investments that illustrate the value of ESG data in investment decision-making. Investing utilizing Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) data, often referred to as sustainable investing, has become popular and mainstream in today's financial marketplace. Estimates of assets under management (AUM) invested according to ESG factors range as high as \$41 trillion. Recent polls indicate 62 percent of those responding were not familiar or not too familiar with ESG, while 54 percent favored including ESG factors in their investment decisions. Incorporating ESG factors into our investment decisions provides transparency that can improve financial performance by mitigating risks while contributing to progress on environmental and social issues.

Unfortunately, ESG has become very politicized in the U.S. by politicians and special interest groups. These groups confuse ESG with other terms such as Socially Responsible Investing and Impact Investing. Each of these investment approaches satisfy different investor preferences. ESG is intended to be an investment strategy that incorporates material environmental, social, and

---

\* The Hatch Center encourages vigorous discussion on a variety of pressing policy issues. In that spirit, this essay presents an alternative view to others presented in this year's Policy Review. The views in this essay reflect those of the author.

governance data in investment decision-making. When done correctly, material ESG factors have positive financial impacts on companies and investors. Over the long term, companies that have been managed according to ESG best practices have outperformed their peers in numerous studies.

Socially Responsible Investing (SRI) is often confused with ESG. SRI is usually associated with investments that are made according to the values of the investor. For example, an SRI investor may decide they don't want to invest in tobacco. Negative screens for tobacco companies are then applied to screen out these companies from the investment portfolio. To the contrary, an ESG investor that didn't want to limit the tobacco sector in their portfolio could invest in tobacco companies, choosing those that scored higher in ESG methodology.

Impact Investing is different than both ESG and SRI. Impact investments are intentional investments made in companies or funds whose products or services are directly addressing a social need or purpose. Examples might be affordable housing or solar energy. Impact investment themes often refer to the seventeen 2015 U.N. Sustainable Development Goals to classify different impact investing sectors. An impact investment could be in a company that does or does not score well in ESG methodology.

Many of the recent critiques of ESG conflate these terms, making every ESG fund the same. But the reality is that there are thousands of ESG, SRI, and Impact funds, all with different investment strategies and objectives. If someone doesn't want fossil fuel companies in their portfolio, there's a fund for that. If someone wants to invest in just the energy or healthcare sector, there's a fund for that. If someone wants to invest in a sustainable energy fund, there's a fund for that.

This past year has once again seen some of the hottest days on record. Forest fires have choked parts of California and the Northeast. The climate crisis is very real. And already it is having an impact on our lives and our investment portfolios. Extreme weather events attributed to climate change are becoming more frequent as each year passes by. Global food shortages and health care crises are demanding new and innovative solutions.

Impact investing is growing significantly, nearing \$1.2 trillion in AUM with the potential to go well beyond ESG in directly addressing the biggest societal challenges in a scalable, self-sustaining way. Affordable housing, sustainable energy, access to health care and education, financial inclusion, and better jobs and livelihoods are but a few examples. A decade ago, when agriculture conglomerate Monsanto acquired the climate tech company Climate Corp. for nearly \$1 billion, it was a groundbreaking deal for clean tech. Today, however, there are an estimated 83 climate-tech unicorns globally collectively

valued at more than \$180 billion, and more are emerging every year. We will solve our most difficult problems through impact investing in a collaboration of public, private, philanthropic, and corporate capital.

#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

*Jim Sorenson is a world-renowned entrepreneur, venture investor, and pioneer in impact investing. His belief in doing well by doing good has informed every aspect of his life.*

*A lifelong entrepreneur, Sorenson managed several successful business enterprises in college. He was at the forefront of many technological developments in the communication software industry, including digital compression software and video relay services.*

*Sorenson has a track record as an investor, founder, and funder of investment management businesses in the venture capital and private equity sectors. These include Sorenson Capital, Utah's leading mid-market private equity firm; the student-led University Venture Fund at the University of Utah's David Eccles School of Business; and the impact-driven real estate investment firm Catalyst Opportunity Funds.*

*Sorenson Communications, one of the companies Sorenson has built, is one of the largest employers of the Deaf in the world, creating digital communications software and transforming lives in the Deaf community while delivering returns to its investors.*

*In 2013, Sorenson endowed the David Eccles School of Business at the University of Utah with a \$13 million gift to create the Sorenson Impact Center. The Center helps organizations achieve their impact vision by connecting capital to social and environmental solutions, helping organizations measure, report, improve impact, and integrate data science and people-centered storytelling into what they do.*

*Sorenson serves or has served on many community service boards, including Village Capital, the U.S. Advisory Board for Impact Investing, the University Venture Fund, Art Works for Kids, Gallaudet University, the University of Utah Board of Trustees, the University of Utah's David Eccles School of Business, the Utah Sports Commission, and the Utah Governor's Office of Economic Development. Sorenson also co-founded and was Chairman of the Board of the Utah Chamber of Artists.*

**NUCLEAR SCIENCE IN A WORLD WHERE  
NUCLEAR IS NOT UNDERSTOOD**

By Grace Stanke

Despite nuclear power producing 10 percent of global energy, rarely do we think much about it in our day-to-day experience. We have our own lives, passions, and separate interests. Each of these might seem like a world of its own. For example, I competitively water ski, and rarely does the subject of nuclear engineering come up during a water-skiing tournament. While nuclear science is a major part of my life, it is not the only part. Many of the people I interact with in my other “worlds” do not have any knowledge of or interest in nuclear science.

One of my worlds involves the Miss America Organization. I’ve shared stories about my experiences as Miss Wisconsin and discussed nuclear issues with numerous individuals. In my role as Miss Wisconsin, I advanced to compete for Miss America and was honored with the title on December 15, 2022.

The world of Miss America rarely sees the words “nuclear energy.” Going into the competition, I wasn’t sure how the judges would receive my message. When entering a world in which nuclear science is not understood, it’s always something of a question how others will react. This world was a competition, and I knew that being a nuclear engineer committed to promoting nuclear energy put me in a rather unusual—and challenging—position.

Part of the competition is the private job interview. Each candidate undergoes a 9.5-minute panel interview with a 30-second closing statement, where they can be asked anything. I have been asked about reparations for racism in America, recruitment strategies for the Miss America organization, coping mechanisms, organization strategies, and so much more. These intense interviews were great preparation for engineering job interviews.

The interview process is the only opportunity candidates have to speak with the judges personally. I knew this was the best time to discuss nuclear science’s importance and to convince the judges why they should select me to be the next Miss America. I needed to share my message that nuclear power is a safe, effective, and reliable form of energy. One fear trickled into my mind, however: In a world where nuclear science is not understood, will it even be brought up?

That question lingered in my mind and was one of my biggest fears entering the competition. Nuclear engineering, advocating for nuclear science, and promoting nuclear energy were important parts of the background I brought to the table as a Miss America contestant. But why would the panelists ask an unprompted question about it?

I was ecstatic when the first question was about a nuclear policy I supported. Nothing better than getting that fear out of the way! However, the plot thickens: That morning, Lawrence Livermore National Lab performed the first

controlled fusion reaction, creating more energy than the experiment took to perform. As a former fusion researcher, I was eager to explore that success in my personal interview.

I didn't expect the remainder of my competition to focus on the recent fusion discovery. I strongly support fusion, yet most of my time and energy focuses on current nuclear power plants, preserving them, and changing the general public's perception about nuclear power to be more supportive. My onstage question, however, was whether I believed fusion is the future of energy.

Of course I do.

The question I received on the final night of the competition was similar and led to a discussion about nuclear energy. It quickly became apparent that fusion was dominating the conversation.

When people first learn of a new technology, or a new thing, they often focus on the "shiniest" item. Fusion was overtaking the news that week. After winning, my first month was focused on where nuclear science is prevalent in our society and how current nuclear power plants impact our world. It had less to do with fusion. I hope that will change, because fusion is an incredibly important subject that more Americans need to understand.

2023 has been a tremendous year for nuclear energy growth. Vogtle Unit 3 in Georgia came online, the first new nuclear reactor in America in 30 years. According to a Gallup poll, 55 percent of Americans are open to building new nuclear plants here in America. On December 13, nuclear energy was included in the final draft of the COP28 agreement. Nuclear energy has seen wins globally, but this is only the beginning.

To bring the vision of nuclear science to a world where the subject is too often misunderstood requires knowledge and communication skills. I'm doing my best to change the public's perception of nuclear science, and I urge you to participate in this advocacy project, too. Share your nuclear knowledge and help change public perception. Public opinion fuels our politics. Start within your communities. It's time to educate the public and move the nuclear conversation forward!

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

*Grace Stanke, winner of Miss America 2023, was named the “new face of nuclear energy” by the Wall Street Journal, signifying a significant shift toward a new generation of voices representing and advocating for clean and sustainable energy sources.*

*A nuclear engineering graduate from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, Stanke was crowned Miss America 2023 and is now leading the conversation to change how Americans perceive nuclear energy. Since winning the Miss America title, Stanke has traveled the world advocating for “Clean Energy, Cleaner Future.” She participates in educational campaigns, conferences, speaking engagements, and collaborative initiatives to promote a clean energy future. Her world tour will conclude with a tour of nuclear facilities in Japan and participation in the World Nuclear Exhibition in Paris and 28th Conference of the Parties in Dubai.*



# RESTORATION OF THE GREAT SALT LAKE

By Brian Steed

Since the mid-1980s, the Great Salt Lake has experienced an alarmingly consistent decline.<sup>1</sup> In late fall of 2022, the lake reached the lowest water level recorded since pioneers settled the Salt Lake Valley in 1847.<sup>2</sup> In what is hopefully the nadir of current lake trends, the low water, accompanied by high salinity, led to decreased ecologic vitality on the lake. The lake's iconic brine shrimp slowed reproduction, and brine flies all but disappeared. Lower lake levels have left hundreds of square miles of exposed lakebed, leading to the fear of major dust events further impairing the airshed along the Wasatch Front and faster snowpack loss as dust reduces the snow's natural reflective capacity.<sup>3</sup>

All of these events caught the public's attention. Some observers even feared that the lake might disappear altogether, to which Governor Spencer Cox emphatically stated, "I'm telling people: On my watch, we are not allowing the lake to go dry. We will do whatever it takes to make sure that doesn't happen."<sup>4</sup> The Governor and Legislature made good on this promise by adopting substantial policy changes and making substantial investments in conservation.<sup>5</sup> But, is all this effort worthwhile?

### *The Importance of the Great Salt Lake*

Without question, the Great Salt Lake is an ecological treasure. It is the largest saline lake in the Western Hemisphere and the eighth-largest saline lake in the world. Its 1,700 square miles of water, islands, and shorelines contain Utah's highest density of wetlands and provide habitat for plants, brine flies, brine shrimp, reptiles, amphibians, mammals, shorebirds, and waterfowl. The lake serves as a critical link in the Pacific Flyway between North and South America, with 10 to 12 million birds from 338 species passing through each year to rest, eat, and breed.<sup>6</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Great Salt Lake Strike Team, *Great Salt Lake Policy Assessment* (Feb. 9, 2023), <https://gardner.utah.edu/wp-content/uploads/GSL-Assessment-Feb2023.pdf?x71849>; U.S. Geological Survey, *Great Salt Lake at Saltair Boat Harbor, UT* (Dec. 18, 2023), <https://waterdata.usgs.gov/monitoring-location/10010000/#parameterCode=62614&period=P7D&showMedian=true>.

<sup>2</sup> Great Salt Lake Strike Team, *supra* note 1; Utah.gov, *Great Sale Lake: About* (Dec. 18, 2023), <https://greatsaltlake.utah.gov/about>.

<sup>3</sup> Jim Davis et al., *Commonly Asked Questions About Utah's Great Salt Lake and Ancient Lake Bonneville* (2d ed. 2022), <https://geology.utah.gov/publication-details/?pub=PI-104>; Utah Div. of Water Res., *Great Salt Lake* (2023), <https://water.utah.gov/great-salt-lake>.

<sup>4</sup> Ben Winslow, 'On My Watch We Are Not Allowing the Lake to Go Dry,' *Utah's Governor Says of Great Salt Lake*, Fox13 (Jan. 11, 2023), <https://www.fox13now.com/news/great-salt-lake-collaborative/on-my-watch-we-are-not-allowing-the-lake-to-go-dry-utahs-governor-says-of-great-salt-lake>.

<sup>5</sup> Utah.gov, *Great Sale Lake: Legislative Actions* (Dec. 18, 2023), <https://greatsaltlake.utah.gov/legislative-actions>.

<sup>6</sup> Utah.gov, *Great Salt Lake: About*, *supra* note 2; Utah Div. of Water Res., *Great Salt Lake One Pager* (2023), <https://greatsaltlake.utah.gov/wp-content/uploads/GSL-One-Pager-2023.pdf>.

Between 5 to 10 percent of the snowpack on the Wasatch Range can be attributed to lake-effect snow—providing “the greatest snow on earth” to winter sports enthusiasts and a critical augmentation of local water supply necessary for sustaining over 2.5 million people residing in Northern Utah. Minerals extracted from the lake find their way into cell phones, laptop computers, soda cans, airplane wings, medical devices, and so much more. Fertilizers taken from the lake nourish fruit and nut crops grown in California. Shrimp farmers use brine shrimp from the Great Salt Lake in far-flung corners of the globe, such as Ecuador, Israel, and Indonesia. The lake itself is a tourist destination drawing hundreds of thousands of visitors annually. Combined, these activities generate billions of dollars in Utah’s annual economic activity.<sup>7</sup>

### *Factors Driving Lake Decline*

Three factors have interacted to drive lake decline. First, prolonged drought has resulted in less water getting to the lake. Second, warmer temperatures have increased evaporation off the lake. Third, and most significantly, despite these conditions, people have continued their levels of water use.<sup>8</sup> Human water depletion numbers have varied through the years, as have the competing water demands. Total human depletion from 2017-2021 was estimated to be about 2.3 million acre-feet. Of that, agricultural depletion averaged about 1.48 million acre-feet annually, and municipal and industrial uses averaged about 375,000 acre-feet per year. Other significant contributors to depletions include mineral extraction activities (165,000 acre-feet annually), evaporation off of reservoirs (28,000 acre-feet annually), and water diverted into managed wetlands (283,000 acre-feet annually).<sup>9</sup>

---

<sup>7</sup> Utah.gov, *Great Salt Lake: About*, *supra* note 2; Utah Div. of Water Res., *Great Salt Lake*, *supra* note 3.

<sup>8</sup> Great Salt Lake Strike Team, *supra* note 1.

<sup>9</sup> *Id.*

### Human Water Depletion by Type in the Contemporary Period 2010–2021

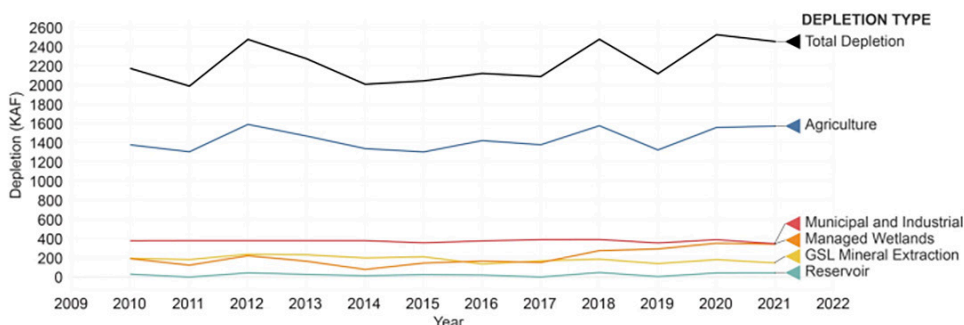


Figure 1: Great Salt Lake Strike Team, Great Salt Lake Policy Assessment (Feb. 9, 2023), <https://gardner.utah.edu/wp-content/uploads/GSL-Assessment-Feb2023.pdf?x:71849>.

#### Policy Responses to Restore the Lake

Utah’s Governor, Legislature, and other stakeholders have responded to this ecological catastrophe with significant public investments and policy changes.

Recent efforts include:

- Appropriating \$250 million to install meters in previously unmetered untreated water connections in municipal and industrial settings;
- Appropriating \$270 million for agricultural water optimization to ensure more water-conscious agricultural production;
- Passing legislation to ensure more integrated land use and water planning;
- Initiating statewide water-saving device rebates;
- Creating a statewide landscape conversion incentive program incentivizing the replacement of thirsty lawns with waterwise landscaping; and
- Creating the office of the Great Salt Lake Commissioner to coordinate state efforts on the lake and develop a strategic plan to restore the lake to healthy levels.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Utah.gov, *Great Sale Lake: Legislative Actions*, *supra* note 5; Utah Dep’t Nat. Res., *What DNR Is Doing to Benefit Great Salt Lake* (2023), <https://greatsaltlake.utah.gov/wp-content/uploads/DNR-GSL-actions-Nov-2023.pdf>.

The Great Salt Lake remains a dynamic system. Our management approach to the lake must be similarly dynamic and adjust as necessary to meet new challenges and opportunities. Accordingly, it is important that we make plans for the short-term, medium-term, and long-term.

Additionally, any proposed solution to sustaining the Great Salt Lake is most likely to be successfully implemented only if it is:

1. Ecologically sustainable;
2. Economically viable;
3. Politically possible;
4. Technically feasible; and,
5. Legally sound.

All five of these criteria are necessary for success. For instance, high costs may doom a potential solution even if something is easily engineered, ecologically sustainable, and politically popular. Similarly, a simply engineered, lower-cost proposed solution may fail if it is not politically implementable.

Any strategy for returning the lake to a healthier range will be challenging. Filling the lake in 30 years to the low end of what has been identified as the optimal range for the lake's long-term health will require at least 471,000 acre-feet annually of additional water delivered to the lake. To put that into perspective, a 19 percent reduction of all water depletions in the Great Salt Lake Basin is estimated to result in 399,000 acre-feet of conservation per year.<sup>11</sup> The good news is that any increase in water elevation from where the lake is today will bring additional benefits to the ecosystem, human health, and the economy.

While the challenges surrounding the Great Salt Lake are real, they are not insurmountable. Intentional efforts on the lake can have positive impacts. The State of Utah is committed to meeting the challenge. We have already implemented real reforms that will have long-term benefits for the lake. The Governor and Legislature stand willing to continue making the changes necessary to ensure a healthy lake going forward.

---

<sup>11</sup> Great Salt Lake Strike Team, *supra* note 1.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

*Brian Steed is the Executive Director of Utah State University's (USU) Janet Quinney Lawson Institute for Land, Water, and Air and the Inaugural Great Salt Lake Commissioner appointed by Utah Governor Spencer J. Cox. Steed began his position at USU in July 2022 with the goal of connecting USU researchers and programs with government and public partners to address concerns on natural resource issues. As Great Salt Lake Commissioner, Steed serves the Governor and State of Utah in conjunction with his position at the Lawson Institute.*

*Before his current roles, Steed served as the Executive Director of the Utah Department of Natural Resources, heading that agency after his appointment in 2019 by then-Governor Gary Herbert.*

*Steed also served as the U.S. Bureau of Land Management's deputy director for policy and programs and exercised the authority of the director from 2017-2019. He was the chief of staff to Representative Chris Stewart from 2013-2017. Steed also previously served as deputy county attorney for Iron County and taught political science and economics at USU.*

*Hailing from Logan, Utah, Steed first attended USU, earning both a Bachelor of Arts and Master of Arts in political science. He earned a Ph.D. in public policy with an emphasis in environmental policy from Indiana University Bloomington and a J.D. from the S.J. Quinney College of Law at the University of Utah, with a natural resources and environmental law certificate.*

# CONSERVATION STARTS WITH CONSERVATIVE IDEALS

By U.S. Representative Bruce Westerman (R-Arkansas)

I've often said, "It's time to put conservatives back into conservation." You would think this statement is a given, that conservatives embody the ideas of conservation. Since the days of President Theodore Roosevelt riding horseback through the American West, Republicans have led the way on responsible conservative solutions to the issues facing our nation's lands, waters, and abundant resources. With this responsibility comes a sacred obligation to steward them well, managing them in ways that allow them to flourish for generations to come.

We do this through promoting access to the lands that belong to all Americans and ensuring that our policies are rooted in the principle that no one should be prohibited from enjoying their benefits. We do this by incentivizing the creative and efficient approaches that define American innovation and ingenuity. We do this by holding federal agencies accountable and engaged for the benefit of the people and communities their actions impact. By using these tools, we can tackle the problems that arise for our lands, waters, and natural resources and provide responsible, conservative solutions.

So, what do these solutions actually look like in practice? Are they sustainable and able to rise to the occasion and address the challenges we face? The answer is a resounding yes. The House Committee on Natural Resources has led the way in advancing solutions to some of the most urgent issues facing Americans, including catastrophic wildfires and President Biden's war on American energy.

From the recent, tragic fire on the island of Maui to the infernos that ravage the American West year after year, we are reaping the harvest of bad forest and land management policies. Who can forget the images coming out of California in 2021 as firefighters worked tirelessly to save the iconic 2,200-year-old Giant Sequoia trees that were threatened by fire and lightning?

Giant Sequoias are the world's largest trees and found only in about 70 groves in California. They are world-renowned for their size and lifespan and provide significant ecological, scientific, and cultural benefits. Giant Sequoias are also fire-resilient and were once considered virtually indestructible.

Yet decades of fire suppression and mismanagement created a massive buildup of hazardous fuels around the Giant Sequoias. Unnaturally intense, high-severity wildfires caused unprecedented destruction, and in the span of two short years fires destroyed nearly one-fifth of all Giant Sequoias.

The Save Our Sequoias Act will provide land managers with the emergency tools and resources needed to save the remaining Giant Sequoias. This legislation would implement enhanced coordination between federal, state, tribal, and local land managers through shared stewardship agreements and provide



funding to establish a new grant program to support the implementation of hazardous fuels reduction treatments in and around Giant Sequoia groves. It also declares a Congressional emergency to codify existing expedited procedures, quickens environmental reviews and consultations, and ensures robust scientific analysis is maintained.

This legislation is a commonsense solution to address a crisis that, if ignored, will make our Giant Sequoias extinct in the next 25 years.

“Putting conservatives back into conservation” also means making the United States energy-dominant once again. We live in a nation blessed with an abundance of resources that we should be using to generate clean, affordable, and reliable energy. House Republicans led the way in the 118th Congress with the passage of H.R. 1, the Lower Energy Costs Act.

This bill will spur increased production of domestic energy, maximize efficiency, and minimize delays for hardrock mining projects on federal land by streamlining permitting for mineral development and limiting claims on all energy, mining, and other infrastructure projects to those filed within 120 days of a final agency action. It will also modernize the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) to foster project development across all sectors without sacrificing environmental standards or public involvement.

At its core, H.R. 1 is about reversing attacks on affordable energy and providing much-needed relief for people struggling to fill their gas tanks and pay utility bills. These families are the ones on the front lines, bearing the brunt of President Biden’s failed policies, and they deserve better.

An all-of-the-above approach to domestic energy and mining is the best way to support America’s energy demands and meet our technological and national security goals. Now is not the time for cancelling oil leases and withdrawing millions of acres of mineral-rich land from use, as the Biden administration has sought to do. Now is the time to use American innovation to safely and efficiently tap into our energy resources to secure our domestic energy needs and those of our allies.

These are just a small portion of the solutions we’ve advanced in this Republican majority. In the House Committee on Natural Resources, we are leading the way in advancing conservative solutions. We have led the way in the past, we are leading the way today, and we will lead the way for the generations to come in promoting access, encouraging innovation, demanding transparency, and responsibly conserving our natural resources.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

*Representative Bruce Westerman is a Hot Springs native currently serving his fifth term as U.S. Representative for the Fourth District of Arkansas, having first been elected in 2014. Representative Westerman serves on the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee and as Chairman of the Natural Resources Committee.*

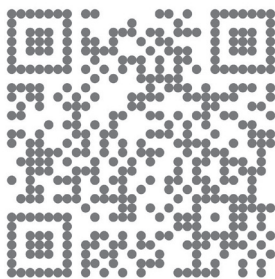
*Before serving in Congress, Representative Westerman was elected to two terms in the Arkansas General Assembly, where he was the state's first Republican House Majority Leader since Reconstruction.*

*An engineer and forester by trade, Representative Westerman worked for 22 years at Mid-South Engineering in Hot Springs. He was named Engineer of the Year by the Arkansas Society of Professional Engineers in 2013.*

*A 1990 graduate of the University of Arkansas with a Bachelor of Science in biological and agricultural engineering, Representative Westerman was a four-year walk-on member of the Razorback football team. He was awarded the Outstanding Young Alumni Award in 2005 and the Distinguished Alumni Award in 2012. He is also a graduate of Yale University, earning a Master of Forestry degree in 2001.*

*Representative Westerman lives in Hot Springs with his wife, Sharon, and their four children. He enjoys hunting and fishing.*

## SUPPORT OUR EFFORTS



 @senatororrinhatch

 @orrinhatch

 @orrinhatchcenter

**H**HATCH CENTER  
CIVILITY & SOLUTIONS