

## Dirty Air Acts Threaten Wildlife: *Delay in reducing global warming pollution will have long-term impacts on wildlife*



*Pika*

For decades Big Oil and corporate polluters have enjoyed free rein to dump global warming pollution into our air. This pollution directly affects wildlife and ecosystems – altering wildlife populations' size and range as well as threatening some species with extinction. The Fish and Wildlife Service has already listed the polar bear as threatened, primarily due to the effects of this pollution. Other species such as corals, pika, and sage grouse are currently harmed, or will be harmed, by global warming. The Nobel-Prize winning Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has said that 20-30% of wildlife species worldwide are at an increased risk of extinction if global warming pollution is not curtailed.

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is in the process of taking common-sense steps to crack down on big oil and other polluters and reduce global warming pollution. However, some Members of Congress are coming to the defense of big oil and corporate polluters. They have offered legislation in the House of Representatives and the Senate that would undermine the Clean Air Act and prevent or delay the EPA from setting global warming pollution reduction standards.<sup>1</sup>

The National Wildlife Federation opposes any attempts to obstruct the use of the Clean Air Act to protect wildlife and ecosystems from global warming pollution.

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## Delay is Costly to Humans, Wildlife, and Natural Systems

Climate change is happening fast and it is hurting our wildlife. Every year that we allow corporate polluters to dump more global warming pollution into the air, the greater the impacts of global warming will be. This means: more severe droughts, shifting ecosystems, increasing invasive species, increased temperatures, sea-level rise, all of which wreak havoc on already fragile wildlife populations.<sup>2</sup>

Global warming is already affecting many sectors of the **economy**. It is starting to affect essential **infrastructure** (such as water treatment, sanitation) and vital **ecosystems** (forests, rivers and lakes)<sup>3</sup> on which our standard of living depends.

- **Coastal wetland loss** – Coastal Wetlands provide vital ecosystem services such as natural water filtration and breeding grounds for a rich diversity of birds, fish and other marine species. Wetlands are already being lost to sea level rise from global warming.<sup>4</sup>
- **Forest Loss** – The pine beetle epidemic has already destroyed millions of acres of forests in North America. Warmer weather allows the pine beetle to thrive and will cause future destruction resulting in further losses in lumber profits and increased logging pressure.<sup>5</sup>

If we continue to delay action to address climate change, efforts to safeguard wildlife and habitat from the inevitable impacts of a changing climate will be less effective and drastically more expensive.

## The Clean Air Act and Global Warming

The Supreme Court case, *Massachusetts v. EPA*, established that the Clean Air Act requires the EPA to reduce global warming pollution if that pollution threatens health or the environment. After reviewing years of scientific findings, the EPA ruled in 2009 that global warming pollution endangers public health and “that climate change is exerting major influences on natural environments and biodiversity.”<sup>6</sup>

Over the past year, the EPA has adhered to the law and pursued sensible measures to reduce greenhouse gases and fulfill its obligations under the Clean Air Act. The EPA has focused on global warming pollution from new vehicle tailpipes and smokestacks of the biggest corporate polluters. While the polluting industries cry foul, any attempt by Congress to stop EPA from reducing global warming pollution is a direct attack on the Clean Air Act.



<sup>1</sup> “Stationary Source Regulations Delay Act” [S. 3072 (Sponsor: Sen. Rockefeller) and HR 4753 (Sponsor: Rep. Rahall)]; Disapproval Resolutions related to EPA’s “Endangerment Finding” for Greenhouse Gases [H.J. Res. 66 (Sponsor: Rep. Jerry Moran), H.J. Res. 76 (Sponsor: Rep. Skelton), H.J. Res. 77 (Sponsor: Rep. Barton), and S.J. Res. 26 (Sponsor: Sen. Murkowski)]; “Save Our Energy Jobs Act” [H.R. 4396 (Sponsor: Rep. Pomeroy)]; Amending the Clean Air Act to remove Greenhouse Gases [H.R. 391 (Sponsor: Rep. Blackburn) and H.R. 4572 (Sponsor Rep. Skelton)].

<sup>2</sup> For more on global warming and its effects on extreme weather events, health, and ecosystems visit <http://www.nwf.org/Global-Warming.aspx>

<sup>3</sup> Center for Integrative Environmental Research. “The Economic Impacts of Climate Change and the Costs of Inaction.” University of Maryland, 2008. <http://www.cier.umd.edu/climateadaptation/index.html>

<sup>4</sup> Fankhauser, Samuel. “Global Warming Damage Costs: Some Monetary Estimates,” Centre for Social and Economic Research on the Global Environment, University College London and University of East Anglia, [http://www.uea.ac.uk/env/cserge/pub/wp/gec/gec\\_1992\\_29.pdf](http://www.uea.ac.uk/env/cserge/pub/wp/gec/gec_1992_29.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> Center for American Progress. 2009. “The Cost of Inaction Is Far Greater than the Cost of Action.” [http://www.americanprogress.org/projects/energy\\_hub/briefs/inaction\\_brief.html](http://www.americanprogress.org/projects/energy_hub/briefs/inaction_brief.html)

<sup>6</sup> “Endangerment and Cause or Contribute Findings for Greenhouse Gases Under Section 202(a) of the Clean Air Act”, Final Rule. Federal Register, Vol. 74, No. 239, p. 66534. 12/15/2009. <http://federalregister.gov/a/E9-29537>