



# Infrastructure Priorities for People, Wildlife, & the Climate

**Congress can pass bold, targeted infrastructure investments that achieve a 30 percent total reduction in U.S. greenhouse gas emissions below a 2016 baseline.**

Investment in our nation's infrastructure is long overdue. Aging roads, bridges, and railways pose safety risks; inefficient buildings and industrial processes are wasting energy; the transportation sector overly relies on polluting fuel sources; out-of-date water systems are ill-equipped to meet public health standards; and the U.S. electric grid is largely unable to handle modern energy needs. Dilapidated infrastructure has simultaneously left communities vulnerable to extreme weather and the other effects of climate change.

At the same time, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and the U.S. National Climate Assessment warn that climate change is not a distant threat — but one that has arrived and is afflicting communities through worsened hurricanes, megafires, flooding, heat waves, and other increasingly common severe weather events. They conclude, and reiterate, that we must strive to limit warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius to avoid the worst impacts of climate change.



*New Orleans, LA after Hurricane Katrina (Credit: Jocelyn Augustino); Block Island wind turbine, RI (Credit: Deepwater Wind); Rocky Neck State Park dune restoration, CT (Credit: Laura McMillan).*

The 116th Congress has an important and meaningful opportunity to address our changing climate and to invest in our nation's energy, industrial, transportation, water, and natural infrastructure systems alike to increase community safety and resilience, protect and recover wildlife, boost local economies and family-sustaining jobs, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions in a technology-inclusive way. These investments will benefit every community in America and are a fiscally responsible insurance policy against costly extreme weather and climate effects. And, they provide a down payment on the low-carbon economy of the future.

The National Wildlife Federation emphasizes three major opportunities to improve resilience and reduce emissions significantly through an infrastructure policy: 1) Boost natural infrastructure and carbon sinks; 2) Build a clean grid, and; 3) Advance smart transportation solutions.

## **The National Wildlife Federation's infrastructure priorities include:**

1. **Create resilient communities and ecosystems by protecting and restoring natural infrastructure.** While healthy ecosystems may not typically be considered “infrastructure,” these resources can protect people and property from future climate impacts while providing invaluable carbon sequestration benefits. Recommendations include:
  - a. A Resilient Communities Revolving Loan Fund and Grants Program, to provide targeted assistance to vulnerable populations; and
  - b. Direct investment for additional measures to: bolster coastal resilience and disaster preparedness; improve water infrastructure and natural water storage; increase ecosystem and habitat protection and restoration; enhance wildlife corridors; promote clean, affordable, and reliable water for all, including Tribal populations; reclaim abandoned mine lands; improve forest restoration and management; enhance soil health and agricultural resilience; and accelerate public lands maintenance.
  
2. **Build a clean and resilient grid** with:
  - a. Zero- and low-carbon electricity generation incentivized through a Climate-Smart Technology Neutral Tax Credit;
  - b. Reduced energy use in buildings and industry as supported by an Energy Efficiency Revolving Loan Fund; and
  - c. Direct investment for carbon capture and utilization research, methane pollution reductions, smart metering, and improved electricity reliability.
  
3. **Deploy a smart transportation system** by:
  - a. Extending tax credits for fuel cell and electric vehicles;
  - b. Electrifying the transportation sector through expanded block grant programs and incentives that promote fleet purchases and installation of public and private charging stations; and
  - c. Investing in smart urban planning, mass transit, increased rail use, and truly low-carbon, sustainable biofuels.

## **High Road Standards**

Effectively addressing our infrastructure crisis requires maintaining the full suite of protections provided by the nation's environmental laws, while improving equitable access to their benefits and ensuring the health and safety of the most vulnerable people and communities. Projects built with public resources should embrace Buy America standards and ensure family-sustaining wages and safe working conditions for our workers, and make a robust investment in workforce education and job training.

Repairing America's infrastructure systems is also a critical opportunity to increase economic opportunities for workers, build up the American manufacturing sector, support local jobs, and improve public health, while safeguarding communities and reducing our climate vulnerability. We will accrue these benefits only if we tackle this challenge the right way.