As we celebrate the 50th anniversary of Earth Day, the Global Alliance invites you to learn more about current issues and policies related to our environment.

Just the facts....

Did the month of March seem unusually hot to you? It wasn't your imagination. According to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), March 2020 was the second-hottest March on record on the Earth. This followed a record-hot January and the second-hottest February.

January through March 2020 has been the second hottest year to date on the globe.

COVID-19 and the Environment

Has the heat that we've experienced helped to fuel the spread of COVID-19? Maybe not. Earlier this month, the National Academies of Science examined the issue and suggested that the virus may not slow in heat and humidity especially in the absence of other strategies like social distancing.

Then again, maybe it has. When the environment is altered, opportunities are created for new viruses to evolve. As noted by Professor Katharine Hayhoe, a climate scientist at Texas Tech and author of the *National Climate Assessment*, everything is related. The causes and effects of climate change can worsen threats like coronavirus and other zoonotic diseases.

Improving the environment is possible! The impact of humans on the planet can be seen in recent efforts to contain the Coronavirus. Significant reductions in pollution and greenhouse emissions have

resulted from "stay at home" and social distancing policies. But, will the effects of these policies last. Some experts are hoping that the current reductions translate in to policies and action to create more lasting change.

Unfortunately, the Trump Administration's recent relaxation of environmental rules in response to the Coronavirus pandemic may have a detrimental impact on the environment. Environmental groups have sued and the UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights and the Environment issued a special appeal urging countries not to use the pandemic as an excuse to weaken environmental protection and enforcement.

The economic costs of climate change

NOAA has documented 44 unique climate events from 2017 to 2019 costing Americans more than $460 billion. In the face of these devastating losses, the Environmental Integrity Project summarizes the environmental protections that the Trump Administration has attempted to roll back. Check out the Center for American Progress to see how these regulatory changes are affecting your state.

Health and Climate Change

The effects of climate-related events -- floods, wildfires, hurricanes, tornadoes, heat waves, drought -- can have direct and indirect effects (e.g., damage to physical and social infrastructure, food and water shortages, displacement) on the health and well-being of individuals and communities.   The New England Journal of Medicine (NEJM) has developed an interactive graphic to illustrate the impact of climate change on health and health care delivery.

Most people who experience a climate-related event won't suffer long-term psychological consequences. Individuals and communities that proactively prepare to cope with climate adversities are more likely to be resilient in the face of disaster. The American Psychiatric Association provides guidance for strengthening individual resilience before and after a disaster.   Protecting mental and physical health also requires building community resilience, which includes taking steps to reduce disparities in resources and increasing supports for all members of the community.

Young people and climate change

In 2017, the American Psychological Association described a new condition, eco-anxiety or climate anxiety. The condition, which is not a specific condition in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, is defined as a "chronic fear of environmental doom." It's a type of anxiety that may be felt most acutely by children and youth. A Washington Post-Kaiser Family Foundation poll of American teens released in September 2019 revealed that 57% of teens said that climate change made them feel scared and 52% said it made them feel angry. Both of these rates were higher than for adults. Only 29% of teens were optimistic about the environment.

Climate Migration

Large-scale displacement caused by climate and weather-related events continue to be experienced globally. The United Nations estimates that there could be between 25 million and 1 billion environmental migrants by 2050. The World Migration Report 2020 highlights the growing impact of

environmental and climate change on human mobility, including planned migration/relocation and displacement.

Resources

For more information, check out....

- [Eco-America](#)
- [American Public Health Association](#)
- [Climate Psychiatry Alliance](#)
- [US Climate and Health Alliance](#)
- [International Transformational Resilience Coalition](#)