

Environmental Learning Center
White Paper

The Paris Climate Agreement: What is it, why did we leave, why did we go back?

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Consistent with the mission of the ELC, I thought I would take this opportunity to update you on a very timely matter - the Paris Climate Agreement.

It is well documented that major and catastrophic shifts in the earth's climate have taken place five times, as early as 450 million years ago up to as recently as 66 million years ago. The most recent change is fairly well known as it resulted in the extinction of the dinosaurs. The earth has survived each of these major climate changes, however, the same cannot be said for the creatures living on earth at the time of these devastating changes.

As you probably already know, on June 1, 2017. President Trump announced that the U.S. would cease participation in the Paris Climate Agreement. According to the rules of the agreement, the U.S. withdrawal could not officially take place until November 4, 2020. On January 20, 2021, his first day in office, President Biden brought the U.S. back into the Agreement.

So what is the Paris Climate Accord, why did President Trump withdraw, and why did President Biden get the U.S. back into the agreement?

The Paris Climate Agreement is a legally binding international treaty on climate change. It was adopted by nearly every nation in the world in Paris on December 12, 2015 and was entered into force on November 4, 2016. Its goal is to limit global warming to well below 2, preferably 1.5 degrees Celsius. The agreement includes commitments from all major carbon gas emitting countries to cut their climate pollution and to strengthen those commitments over time.

President Trump outlined several reasons for leaving the Paris agreement. His rationale centered on what he projected as job loss in the U.S. due to our participation in the agreement, his assertion that there would be minuscule reduction in global temperature, his projections on the high cost to the economy, and his downplaying the impact of rising global temperatures.

Although it will take 30 days from the day of President Biden's inauguration for the U.S. to rejoin the agreement, President Biden stated his intention to rejoin the agreement during his campaign. By doing so he expressed his sense of urgency in addressing climate change, and his need to reverse climate policies of the past

four years. His message was a strong one to the rest of the world on what he considers to be one of the biggest problems that we face on the planet.

Although there is strong consensus in the scientific community that climate change is very detrimental to the world and is caused by human activity, there are divergent opinions in the political world. As an average citizen it is sometimes hard to tell what is right regarding this matter, what is wrong, who is telling the truth, and who is not. There is a plethora of credible and valuable resources available that provide all sorts of information on climate change. Some are contained in the links below.

<https://unfoundation.org/blog/post/7-reasons-united-states-needs-paris-climate-agreement/>

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/mindylubber/2020/12/10/why-rejoining-the-paris-agreement-is-so-important-for-the-us/?sh=3445101405fb>

<https://americaisallin.com/>

I urge all of you to read what you can, get the facts, learn about the details of the Paris Climate agreement, and learn what is behind the various political positions. Then I encourage you to communicate your thinking on climate change and the agreement to our local and federal politicians encouraging them to make the right policy decisions regarding climate change and our environment. With your help, we can all help make a change that will benefit the entire world!