

THE AMERICAN ALPINE CLUB



The American Alpine Club Policy Position Statement on Climate Change June 1, 2019

The world's mountains have fascinated humankind throughout history and have united members of the American Alpine Club (AAC) since its founding in 1902. They are home to millions of people and the supply of fresh water for billions. They provide resources, recreation opportunities, and a source of cultural values for humanity, but are increasingly affected by environmental change. The impacts of climate change on alpine environments, ecosystems, and societies grow more evident every day. Alpine environments provide the backdrop for activities most cherished by AAC members, but they are in peril and it is time to act. As a first step in addressing the impacts of climate change on humanity and our members collectively, the AAC is clarifying its official position.

The AAC endorses the overwhelming scientific consensus on climate change—the world is warming and carbon emissions, sourced from the burning of fossil fuels and deforestation, is largely the driver. The pace of this change is variable from place to place, but the overall effect on alpine environments is significant. These changes are global, blind to state or national boundaries, and impact everyone regardless of their political affiliation. For the climbing community, economic growth and environmental conservation are mutually reinforcing goals. The AAC does not view this as a political issue, but as a moral issue facing all of our members, and all of humanity.

Mountain regions are warming at roughly twice the pace of the global average and AAC members are bearing witness to these changes directly. As climbers, skiers, and mountaineers, we are intimately familiar with the mountain landscapes of the world. In our travels, many of us have witnessed change as mountain weather becomes more extreme, glaciers retreat, and dangers from avalanches, rockfall, and mudslides increase. Rock climbing areas are becoming hotter and more frequently impacted by wildfires, while suitable terrain for skiing and ice climbing is shrinking due to warming winters and changing seasons.

While the AAC is concerned about the impact that a changing climate will have on our shared climbing environment, we are equally concerned about *all of the adverse impacts* of climate change, especially those affecting front line, subsistence mountain communities worldwide. We acknowledge that climate change disproportionately impacts poor and marginalized communities lacking the resources to adapt, especially those in rural mountain communities internationally. As climbers, mountain towns and villages are the basecamps for our expeditions and the people who reside there are our friends, guides, and in some circumstances, our rescuers. The AAC cares deeply about these communities and thus we will advocate for climate justice initiatives by working to protect marginalized mountain communities.



American Alpine Club's Climate Action Items

Climate change is a global phenomenon with impacts that can be observed at the local and regional scale. As such, the AAC's approach to climate change addresses internal, local and global initiatives.

Internally, the AAC commits to addressing climate change by:

- Developing a Climate Change Task Force, comprised of leading researchers who will provide the evidence-based guidance necessary for the AAC to effectively engage in climate advocacy efforts.
- Actively reducing its own carbon footprint by identifying means of moving towards net-zero carbon emissions as an organization through such initiatives as sustainable energy improvements in the American Mountaineering Center and encouraging the Board of Directors and its Committees to engage in web-based meetings rather than air travel, where appropriate.
- Expanding funding for *AAC Research Grants*, which are partly aimed at understanding and minimizing the impacts of climate change on alpine environments, ecosystems, and societies. This will be accomplished by broadening partnerships with outdoor industry leaders who possess a like-minded interest in environmental protection and advocacy.
- Working towards increasing the sustainability of AAC campgrounds and other properties while also making climate and policy educational resources available to AAC campground visitors.

At a local and national level, the AAC will address climate change through:

- Advocating for legislation and policies which act to mitigate the impacts of climate change and protect our air, water, public lands and healthy mountain environments for current and future generations to enjoy.
- Endorsing plans which pivot from traditional energy sources towards a future of clean and renewable energy like wind and solar. The AAC will strongly contest public land management decisions which prioritize resource extraction over the protection of outdoor recreation assets on our national public lands.
- Developing scientific research on the economic and ecological impacts of climate change on local outdoor recreation-based economies and venues.
- Partnering with national organizations such as the Protect our Winters, Winter Wildlands Alliance, The Outdoor Alliance, and others to craft and implement national solutions to mitigating the effects of climate change.

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Finally, at a global level, the AAC will address climate change through:

- Identifying pathways for its members to participate in carbon offset programs when traveling for alpine recreation.
- Developing resources to connect climbers with scientists doing research in mountain settings, and crafting mechanisms for climbers to document observed changes and climate impacts in the places they climb.
- Partnering with global climbing organizations to craft and implement global solutions to mitigating the effects of climate change. The AAC will also pursue partnerships with organization like Sustainable Summits, the Mountain Research Initiative, the Juneau Icefield Research Program, the American Climber Science Program, and various academic institutions to achieve this goal.

The American Alpine Club represents an outdoor community whose ethos is inextricably linked to healthy mountain environments and ecosystems. It is time that we address this direct threat to the climbing community and engage in coordinated action to mitigate the impacts of climate change. Failure to act with urgency threatens important alpine environments which support the health and vitality of our community. As such, the American Alpine Club is committed to taking action on climate change.