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Executive Order 13514 on Federal Sustainability, Secretarial Order 3289, and What They Mean for NPS

The Administration has issued two key mandates in the past month that will be instrumental in defining how we will address climate change.

Secretarial Order 3289 – Addressing the Impacts of Climate Change on America’s Water, Land, and Other Natural and Cultural Resources

On September 14th, Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar signed Secretarial Order No. 3289, which establishes as priorities the development of environmentally responsible renewable energy on our nation’s public lands, and the protection of “our country’s water, land, fish and wildlife, and cultural heritage and tribal lands and resources from the dramatic effects of climate change that are already occurring – from the Arctic to the Everglades.” In addition, the secretarial order establishes a framework through which Interior bureaus will coordinate climate change science and resource management strategies to address climate change. The newly established framework consists of: a Climate Change Response Council to coordinate DOI’s response to the impacts of climate change; eight DOI regional Climate Change Response Centers to synthesize climate change impact data; and a network of Landscape Conservation Cooperatives to engage DOI and federal agencies, local and state partners, and the public to craft practical, landscape-level strategies for managing climate change impacts within the eight regions.

EXECUTIVE ORDER 13514 – FEDERAL LEADERSHIP IN ENVIRONMENTAL, ENERGY, AND ECONOMIC PERFORMANCE

The new executive order, signed on October 5th, requires agencies to measure, manage, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions toward agency-defined targets. The order also requires agencies to meet a number of energy, water, and waste reduction targets, including:

- 30% reduction in vehicle fleet petroleum use by 2020;
- 26% improvement in water efficiency by 2020;
- 50% recycling and waste diversion by 2015;
- 95% of all applicable contracts will meet sustainability requirements; and
- Implementation of the 2030 net-zero-energy building requirement.

The order institutes a framework for reporting and accountability regarding each agency’s sustainability performance starting in 2011.

Impact on the National Park Service

Climate change is potentially the most far-reaching and consequential challenge to our mission than any other previously encountered in the history of the National Park Service. Climate change challenges the very foundation of the National Park System and our ability to leave America’s natural and cultural heritage unimpaired for future

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generations. We are already experiencing effects of climate change on park resources, but the full severity of its impact is dependent upon the time it takes to bring global atmospheric carbon dioxide concentrations below 1990 levels.

The Executive and Secretarial Orders will help us address this challenge and change the way we manage our parks – a management approach where our impact on climate change is taken into full consideration in the daily decisions we make. Both documents push us to address climate change in a comprehensive manner. We will need to address climate in three key areas: education, mitigation and adaptation. Some key examples of how we will need to respond to these mandates include:

- Set baseline emission inventories and greenhouse gas reduction goals for all national park units;
- Support the development of renewable energy on public lands and encourage these activities within NPS boundaries in a manner that coincides with the NPS Mission;
- Reduce energy and water consumption and improve the energy and water efficiency of our parks;
- Educate visitors on the threats posed by climate change to parks and opportunities for mitigation; and
- Analyze potential climate change impacts and adaptation strategies when undertaking long-range planning.

Since 2002, through the Climate Friendly Parks (CFP) program, we have conducted GHG inventories and developed Action Plans to mitigate emissions throughout the Service. More than 20 national parks have completed all steps necessary to become a Member Park, and CFP is actively working with more than 100 parks. This foundation empowers our response to both the Executive and Secretarial orders. Through this work we recognize the impact of our activities, our decisions, and our planning on GHG emissions. For this reason, we will be able to move quickly to further reduce our consumption, promote conservation, improve the quality of our workplace, and reach out to our visitors, partners, and communities to advance our mitigation approach. Our investments in GHG mitigation will simultaneously address the challenges of economic recovery, energy security, and most importantly, resource protection. By taking these steps, we will not only reduce the impact of our operations on the climate and our parks, but also provide leadership by example.

For more information, please contact Shawn Norton at Shawn_Norton@nps.gov.

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