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Climate Forward

Here's what Biden's budget would do, and not do, for climate change

The president's federal spending proposal for the next year contains almost \$45 billion to deal with global warming. We looked at the details.

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On Day 1 of his presidency, Joseph R. Biden Jr. brought the United States back into the global climate accord. His administration made bold pledges to cut emissions. It urged other countries to set ambitious climate targets of their own.

Since then, politics and war have stood in the way of any meaningful climate legislation.

Now the White House is taking another stab at advancing its climate agenda. In its \$5.8 trillion budget request for fiscal year 2023, made public on Monday, it includes nearly \$45 billion for several federal

agencies to tackle climate change.

It seeks to prepare us for the reality of life on a hotter planet.

It does not include big-ticket items to enable the United States to pivot away from the combustion of fossil fuels, the main cause of climate change. As my colleague Coral Davenport pointed out, the president's proposed expenditures "say little about what the federal government will do to actually address the nation's two largest contributors to climate change: greenhouse gas emissions from vehicles and power plants."

What the United States does to swiftly bring down its own emissions is critical for the rest of the world. The country is history's largest emitter; its current emissions are second only to China.

Keep in mind his proposed budget is a wish list of how to spend taxpayer dollars. It must be approved by Congress. So, Biden's political test lies in getting it through both houses before the midterm elections in November, while his party still controls Congress.

Not to put too fine a point on it. But the midterms will be crucial in setting U.S. climate policy.

For now, here's what my colleagues and I found notable in his proposal.

It seeks to bolster America's image abroad. Biden is trying to make good on a promise he made to help poorer countries expand renewable energy and adapt to the effects of warming with \$11.4 billion in annual climate finance by 2024. His proposed budget envisions shoring up that money a year early. Whether Congress will go for it is unclear. In approving his 2022 budget request, Congress approved barely \$1 billion for international climate finance.

On Monday, the Natural Resources Defense Council, an advocacy group, called on lawmakers to make

amends. “If enacted, this would help overcome Congress’ recently approved anemic international climate funding, and all parties should rally around this plan,” the group said.

There was immediate opposition from a key Republican. Senator James Risch of Idaho, the ranking Republican on the Foreign Relations Committee, said on Twitter that climate aid “will not stop malign actions from Russia, China and Iran.”

It is an extreme weather budget. The United States Forest Service would get to hire more than 3,000 new staff members to fight wildfires, and the Environmental Protection Agency would get more money for wildfire prevention. The Department of Agriculture would get \$1.8 billion, Coral wrote, to make sure rural homes are built to withstand extreme weather events. The Pentagon would get \$3 billion, mostly to prepare military installations for climate impacts.

It is a nod to demands to tackle environmental racism. The budget creates a new office within the Department of Justice to look into how environmental risks disproportionately affect communities of color. It would allocate \$1.45 billion across several programs run by the Environmental Protection Agency to protect communities facing disproportionately high levels of air and water pollution.

Cars are still king. The largest chunk of the \$142 billion for transportation would be used to fix roads and bridges — or perhaps build new highways, as some Republican state governors prefer. An analysis by the Eno Center for Transportation calculated that 15 percent of the agency’s budget would go toward mass transit.

Drilling on public lands will continue. The Bureau of Land Management, which issues permits for oil and gas drilling on public lands, would get \$1.4 billion under the proposal, while another \$237 million would go to the program that oversees offshore drilling. The Russian invasion of Ukraine has led to calls from

administration officials to export more gas to Europe, in a bid to reduce the continent's dependence on Russian energy. The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission recently scaled back plans to consider how natural gas projects affect climate change and environmental justice. Because of a federal court order, the administration has temporarily halted new drilling on public lands.



The Grant Town power plant in West Virginia. Senator Joe Manchin III has ties to the plant going back to the 1980s. Erin Schaff/The New York Times

Essential news

Boosting coal, earning millions: Senator Joe Manchin's has long helped a power plant that is the sole customer of his private coal business. Along the way, he also blocked climate action.

Antarctic ice collapse: For the first time since satellites began observing Antarctica nearly half a century ago, an ice shelf has collapsed on the eastern part of the continent.

Arctic tensions: Climate change and Russian aggression have led the United States military to stake out a greater presence in the Far North.

Befriending trees: A program in Melbourne, Australia, tracks every public tree — and even gives each an email address.

Other stuff we're following

- Misinformation is derailing renewable energy projects across the United States, according to NPR.
- Former President Donald J. Trump dismisses climate change as a big joke. A Washington Post analysis looks at the political calculation.
- Climate change is making some birds lay their eggs much earlier, Yale Environment 360 reported.
- Colleges are struggling to attract new students to their mining and petroleum engineering programs, E&E News reported.
- According to Google Trends, search interest in electric cars hit a record this month.



Floodwaters from the Yangtze in Wuhan, China, in 2020. The area is implementing some 390 infrastructure projects costing nearly \$2 billion to address its flooding problem. Agence France-Presse — Getty Images

Before you go: Turning cities into sponges

Climate change, combined with urban expansion into wetlands and floodplains, is making flooding worse. So, engineers, architects, urban planners and officials around the world are seeking ways to retrofit or reconstruct cities to better deal with water — basically, to act more like sponges. The idea is to move away

from the traditional, hard infrastructure of concrete walls, culverts and sewer systems, and toward solutions that mimic nature. You can read the full article [here](#).

Thanks for reading. We'll be back on Friday.

Claire O'Neill and Douglas Alteen contributed to Climate Forward.

Reach us at climateforward@nytimes.com. We read every message, and reply to many!