

## MY WAY OF THINKING

## MARK CARWARDINE

The broadcaster and campaigner is seriously concerned about the growing lack of US conservation efforts, and invites your thoughts on the subject.

The US is facing the worst assault on its wildlife and environment in living memory. As President Trump precipitously unravels years of hard-earned progress, heartbroken and beleaguered American conservationists are united in their fear for the future.

The Trump administration was literally minutes old when all references to climate change disappeared from the White House website. Since then, it has been almost impossible to keep up with the torrent of executive orders reversing age-old environmental programmes, damaging reviews of conservation plans and legislation, drastic budget cuts for many critical scientific and environmental agencies, gagging orders, and much more.

The biggie, of course, was the US's announcement that it would be withdrawing from the 2015 Paris Agreement. This landmark accord – an effort to curb global greenhouse gas emissions and limit global warming to within 2°C and to pursue a tougher target of 1.5°C – has been signed by every single country in the world (197 signatories altogether, including Syria, amid its brutal civil war). The shock withdrawal of the world's second-largest carbon polluter has countless damaging consequences – it sets a dangerous precedent for international climate co-operation, encourages other countries to reduce targets, and ruins chances of the US meeting its own reduction pledge, just for starters.

Thank goodness for the American states, cities and green groups that have flung themselves at the gaping

void by attempting to follow the guidelines and principles of the Paris Agreement on their own. It's not as if we can afford to wait for a more environmentally friendly administration – the Paris Agreement is, after all, designed to preserve the liveability of much of the planet. And, as one alarmed US climatologist put it: “you lose a few years, and there goes an ice cap.”

But such efforts are seriously hampered by an administration intent on tearing down any edifice of climate policy, while championing the fossil-fuel industry above all else. Trump has dropped climate change from a list of national security threats (Barack Obama added it specifically to help the country prepare for its worst impacts). He has announced plans to reverse vehicle emission standards and to loosen regulations governing everything from oil and gas drilling to emissions from coal-fired power stations. He has ended NASA's Carbon Monitoring System and,

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keeping his campaign promise to “end the war on beautiful, clean coal”, he even plans to scrap Barack Obama's Clean Power Plan.

Meanwhile, President Trump has also found time to unravel a wide range of wildlife legislation. He has proposed sweeping changes to the Endangered Species Act, including putting a stop to the automatic protections granted to threatened species, such as polar bears and northern spotted owls. He has revoked a ban on the importation of elephant parts, making it legal for American hunters to bring elephant hunt trophies into the USA from some countries, and he is planning to allow hunters in Alaska to shoot hibernating black bears and their cubs, and to use motor boats to track down and shoot swimming caribou.

There is also a frightening move away from science-based decision making. The president has disbanded the US Advisory Council on Wildlife Trafficking, for example, and replaced it with an advisory group comprised entirely of big-game hunters and representatives of the firearms and ammunition industries.

I think this is all just the tip of the iceberg. I'd need the entire magazine to reveal the catalogue of unfolding disasters properly. The bottom line is that American conservationists are embroiled in the fight of their lives. 🐾

MARK CARWARDINE is a frustrated and frank conservationist.

**WHAT DO YOU THINK?** If you want to support Mark in his views or shoot him down in flames, email [wildlifeletters@immediate.co.uk](mailto:wildlifeletters@immediate.co.uk)



A global-warming pact was signed at the COP21 Climate Conference in 2015.