

# 2022 Environmental Priorities for the Arizona Legislature and Governor

We cannot afford to ignore the important issues that affect our state, including ensuring easy access to our democratic processes, acting on the climate crisis, ensuring more sustainable water policies that protect groundwater and rivers, maximizing the health of all Arizonans and addressing the environmental injustice that burdens those most vulnerable in our communities, especially Black, Indigenous, and People of Color. We must also open our ears to the other-than-human voices, including those of future generations, endangered species, the air we breathe, the water that is our life, and the soil that nourishes. We urge fellow Arizonans, and in particular our elected officials, to promote these priorities during the 2022 Legislative session.



## Ensure Access to Democracy for All.

- The freedom for all citizens of age to vote must be protected. The democratic process must reflect and empower our diverse electorate. Unreasonable barriers to voting must be removed.
- People of color must feel safe and welcome as they protest actions by our government and should not be targeted by law enforcement, including imposition of unreasonably high penalties for minor infractions as was proposed in an anti-protester bill in the 2021 legislative session.

**We ask the Arizona Legislature and Governor Ducey to enact an automatic voter registration program, expand early voting opportunities, and ensure that formerly incarcerated individuals are allowed to vote. Access to direct democracy must also be part of this work, including allowing those pursuing ballot measures to collect signatures electronically, and without unreasonable requirements, such as the passage by the legislature of laws intended to make it harder for the public to exercise their right to initiative, referendum, and recall as guaranteed by the state constitution. We also ask that the first amendment right to protest is not infringed upon by law enforcement.**



## Act on the climate crisis—now!

- We are in a climate crisis that affects every sector of our economy and every aspect of our lives, and we have less time to address it than we previously thought in order to avoid the most severe impacts of climate change. According to the most recent Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report, the changes we are seeing are unlike

anything we have seen in thousands of years and they are intensifying<sup>1</sup>. We cannot talk about the long list of environmental issues and economic concerns—water scarcity, pollution, unhealthy air, environmental racism, rising healthcare costs and climate-caused international migration, among others—and ignore the warming climate that makes all these problems exponentially worse. Arizona is among the fastest warming states in the U.S. and is considered the fourth fastest warming state according to States at Risk<sup>2</sup>. The number of dangerous heat days in our state is expected to increase from 50 to 80 by 2050<sup>3</sup>. In 2020, both Phoenix and Tucson experienced the hottest months on record in July and August<sup>4</sup> and in 2021 Phoenix experienced its hottest June on record<sup>5</sup>. All this exacerbates our prolonged extreme drought, expanded wildfire season and larger fires, and increasingly unpredictable and more severe weather patterns. These impacts threaten our personal, community, and economic health.

**We ask the Arizona Legislature and Governor Ducey to pass legislation to develop a climate resiliency plan so Arizona is better prepared for the continued impacts of climate change, promote bills to accelerate investments in clean energy and that do not hinder actions at the Arizona Corporation Commission or at any local level, invest in transportation electrification, including electric school and transit buses along with a more robust electric vehicle charging infrastructure, and help to promote greater energy efficiency, our cheapest cleanest resource. State agencies must be allowed and directed to work collaboratively to develop a Climate Action Plan for Arizona and also work to reduce our state’s greenhouse gas emissions.**



## Managing Precious Water Resources

- Climate change is affecting precipitation and the amount and timing of river

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.ipcc.ch/2021/08/09/ar6-wg1-20210809-pr/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://statesatrisk.org/arizona/extreme-heat>

<sup>3</sup> <https://statesatrisk.org/arizona/extreme-heat>

<sup>4</sup> “Hottest season on record: Merciless Phoenix heat blasts by all-time monthly, summer milestones,” Ian Livingston, Washington Post, September 1, 2020. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/weather/2020/09/01/phoenix-hottest-summer/>,

“August just replaced July as Tucson's hottest month ever recorded,” Tony Davis, Arizona Daily Star, September 1, 2020. [https://tucson.com/news/local/august-just-replaced-july-as-tucsons-hottest-month-ever-recorded/article\\_397cc7ba-b581-575d-8dd0-87f686979c2e.html](https://tucson.com/news/local/august-just-replaced-july-as-tucsons-hottest-month-ever-recorded/article_397cc7ba-b581-575d-8dd0-87f686979c2e.html)

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.azcentral.com/story/news/local/phoenix-weather/2021/07/01/june-2021-breaks-record-hottest-june-record-phoenix/7829100002/>

flows. Runoff in the Colorado and other river systems on which a significant amount of Arizona’s water supply depends for direct use and for groundwater recharge will decline by 20-40 percent by mid-century, exacerbating water supply shortages that already exist<sup>6</sup>. The Colorado River system has been overallocated since the signing of the 1922 Compact and is unable to meet future demand.<sup>7</sup> In 2021, for the first time, the federal government declared shortages on the Colorado River, which will disproportionately affect Arizona beginning in January 2022. Reduced precipitation, increasing heat, increased evapotranspiration from soils and plants, and changes in the timing of runoff to the rivers are making serious droughts of more frequent occurrence and duration. Arizona is in its 26th year of a long-term drought, perhaps the most extreme in the last 1200 years according to scientists<sup>8</sup>. Both groundwater and surface water resources are already over-allocated. Climate change is exacerbating that.

**We ask that the Arizona Legislature pass and Governor Ducey sign bills to measure and limit groundwater pumping throughout Arizona and especially outside active management areas and in areas where it is affecting the flows in our rivers. Rather than merely pursuing importing water from outside Arizona, we ask that our leaders examine the sustainability of the current growth and development patterns, the current agricultural practices, and the opportunities for deeper conservation such as reclamation and treatment of wastewater flows. We also ask them to amend Arizona law to provide for ecological flows in Arizona’s watercourses that will support biological diversity, which currently is gravely threatened by climate change and existing laws that ignore the needs of riparian ecosystems.**



## **Address Environmental Injustice/Racism.**

*“Environmental justice is the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income, with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws,*

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<sup>6</sup> <https://www.demos.org/research/economic-and-environmental-impacts-climate-change-arizona>

<sup>7</sup> “The Colorado River Is Overcommitted. Here Is Why & What We Can Do about it,” Bret Jaspers, December 19, 2019, <https://kjzz.org/content/1359436/colorado-river-overcommitted-heres-why-and-what-we-can-do-about-it> “Management of the Colorado River: Water Allocating, Drought, and the Federal Role,” Charles Stern, Perrvance A. Sheikh, Congressional Research Service, August 16, 2021, <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/R/R45546>

<sup>8</sup> Arizona Drought, Arizona State Climate Office, Accessed 11/05/2021 <https://azclimate.asu.edu/drought/#:~:text=Arizona%20is%20currently%20in%20our,of%20a%20long%2Dterm%20drought.&text=Since%20Arizona%20has%20an%20arid,few%20wetter%20than%20normal%20years.> <https://www.azcentral.com/story/news/local/arizona-environment/2020/05/06/western-megadrought-centuries-worsened-climate-change-global-warming/3036460001/>

*regulations, and policies.”*  
- Environmental Protection Agency

*“Whether by conscious design or institutional neglect, communities of color in urban ghettos, in rural 'poverty pockets,' or on economically impoverished Native-American reservations face some of the worst environmental devastation in the nation.”*

-Dr. Robert Bullard

- Communities of color have especially high asthma rates. African-American and Latinx children visit emergency departments for asthma care more often than white children. Black Americans are 2 to 3 times more likely to die from asthma than any other racial or ethnic group. One in five Latinx adults can't afford their asthma medicines, and adults who didn't finish high school are more likely to have asthma than adults who graduate high school or college<sup>9</sup>
- Water is life. Native American communities disproportionately lack access to safe water and wastewater disposal. Water contamination occurs more often in Native American water systems. Overall, tribal public water systems are twice as likely to violate health-based water quality regulations as non-tribal systems<sup>10</sup>.
- There are more than 500 abandoned uranium mines throughout the Navajo Nation. An analysis of water supplies in the Navajo Nation found disproportionately high levels of arsenic and uranium; 15 percent of unregulated water supplies had high levels of arsenic and more than 12 percent had high levels of uranium<sup>11</sup>.
- Dangerous neurotoxins in lead pipes contaminate drinking water and cause health problems for communities of color at a disproportionate rate. Black children are three times more likely than white children to have elevated blood lead levels<sup>12</sup>.

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<sup>9</sup>The 2016 Arizona Asthma Burden Report, American Lung Association.

<http://www.azdhs.gov/documents/prevention/tobacco-chronic-disease/az-asthma-burden-report.pdf>

<sup>10</sup> Otakuye Conroy-Ben and Rain Richard, Disparities in Water Quality in Indian Country, Universities Council on Water Resources Journal of Contemporary Water Research & Education Issue 163, Pages 31-44, April 2018.

<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/pdf/10.1111/j.1936-704X.2018.03268.x>

<sup>11</sup> Uranium and arsenic unregulated water issues on Navajo lands

Jani C. Ingram,<sup>1</sup> Lindsey Jones,<sup>2</sup> Jonathan Credo,<sup>3</sup> and Tommy Rock, *J Vac Sci Technol A*. 2020 May; 38(3): 031003. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7083651/>

<sup>12</sup> WATER INJUSTICE: ECONOMIC AND RACIAL DISPARITIES IN ACCESS TO SAFE AND CLEAN WATER IN THE UNITED STATES, Issue Brief, Food and Water Watch, March 2017. [https://foodandwaterwatch.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/ib\\_1703\\_water-injustice-web.pdf](https://foodandwaterwatch.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/ib_1703_water-injustice-web.pdf)

- We frequently hear about the disparate impacts of climate change on people in “poor” nations, but not as much is said about the impacts closer to home. Researchers at the University of Arizona “. . . found that the southwestern region is a hotspot both for physical climate change and for social vulnerability with a clear ‘climate gap’ between rich and poor<sup>13</sup>. The Southwest is projected to become hotter and drier under future climate change, creating the potential for heightened vulnerability and increasing challenges to achieve [Environmental Justice]. The Southwest exhibits high social vulnerability, with rankings among the worst in the USA on a range of indicators, including poverty, health insurance, energy and food security, and childhood well-being.”<sup>14</sup>
- A recent Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) report found that Black people are 40% more likely to live in an area with the highest heat-related deaths with increased temperatures of 2 degrees<sup>15</sup>.

**We ask the Arizona Legislature and Governor Ducey to require the Arizona Department of Administration, in consultation with the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality (ADEQ), to ensure that all state agencies, boards, commissions and other public bodies that are involved in decisions that may affect environmental quality adopt and implement environmental justice policies that provide meaningful opportunities for involvement of all people, regardless of race, color, ethnicity, religion, income or education level. We ask that it also require that ADEQ review environmental and public health data to identify existing and proposed industrial and commercial facilities in communities of color and in low-income communities relative to permitting and compliance in order to target disproportionate impacts. It should also require the establishment of an environmental justice task force.**

**We further ask for additional legislation that defines “overburdened communities” as those with significant non-white, non-English speaking, or low-income populations, requires major polluters seeking certain permits in overburdened communities to develop “Environmental Justice Impact Statements” (EJIS) with substantive detail, meaningful public input, and real ADEQ oversight including technical assistance to impacted communities, and empowers ADEQ to deny or condition certain permits due to disproportionate impacts based on the EJIS.**

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<sup>13</sup> Margaret Wilder, Diana Liverman, Laurel Bellante & Tracey Osborne (2016): Southwest climate gap: poverty and environmental justice in the US Southwest, Local Environment, DOI: 10.1080/13549839.2015.1116063. : <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13549839.2015.1116063>

<sup>14</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> “EPA report finds people of color face more harm from climate change,” Zayna Syed, Arizona Republic, October 14, 2021. <https://www.azcentral.com/story/news/local/arizona-environment/2021/10/14/epa-report-finds-people-color-face-more-harm-climate-change/5998059001/>



## Land protection, restoration, and wildlife protection.

- Arizona is blessed with roughly 28 million acres of federal public lands, including wildland gems such as Grand Canyon, Petrified Forest, and Saguaro National Park, the Superstition Wilderness Area, Kaibab National Forest, and Kofa National Wildlife Refuge. These places provide extensive opportunities for recreation and key habitat and corridors for numerous animals and plants, some found no place else. These public lands were all Indigenous lands and are significant to the 22 Tribal nations recognized in Arizona, in addition to containing a rich history of human occupation of the region. Public lands provide us with clean air and clean water. From the San Francisco Peaks to the San Pedro River, Arizonans love and enjoy our public lands.

Public lands also contribute significantly to our \$20 billion plus tourism industry in Arizona as well as to our outdoor recreation industry. According to the National Park Service, there were more than 6.3 million recreational visitors to Grand Canyon National Park in 2018 who spent \$947 million in communities near the park, supporting 12,558 jobs and a cumulative benefit to the local economy of \$1.2 billion<sup>16</sup>. People who watch birds and other wildlife in our state generate a total economic impact of \$1.4 billion each year according to a 2013 report from Tucson Audubon Society<sup>17</sup>.

According to the Arizona Office of Tourism, “Arizona’s warm weather and magnificent natural beauty made tourism the number one export industry in Arizona in 2020.”<sup>18</sup> Our public lands are key to that natural beauty. The more than 32 million people who visited our state helped generate \$2.7 billion in tax revenues in 2020 and supported 160,500 jobs<sup>19</sup>.

Likewise, outdoor recreation along Arizona’s waters generates significant revenues and is a \$13.5 billion industry--more than golf or mining--according to a 2019 Audubon report. “The industry contributes \$7.1 billion to Arizona’s GDP, provides \$4.5 billion in household income and generates \$1.8 billion in tax revenues.”<sup>20</sup> Many of Arizona’s waterways are associated with public lands.

- In addition to a climate crisis, we also have an extinction crisis. Habitat loss and climate change mean that about one-third to one-half of all species on the planet will face extinction. Loss of these species will disrupt ecosystems affecting other plants, animals, and people. Earlier in 2021, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

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<sup>16</sup> <https://www.nps.gov/grca/learn/news/grand-canyon-economic-benefit.htm>

<sup>17</sup> <http://tucsonaudubon.org/images/stories/News/TAS-AZ-WildlifeWatching-Analysis-2011-130718.pdf>

<sup>18</sup> <https://tourism.az.gov/economic-impact/>

<sup>19</sup> <https://tourism.az.gov/economic-impact/>

<sup>20</sup> <https://www.audubon.org/economic-impact-arizonas-rivers-lakes-and-streams>

declared that 22 animals and one plant were officially extinct<sup>21</sup>. Climate change is increasingly a factor, but many of these species were lost due to development. In Arizona, we have approximately 73 plants and animals that are listed on the federal endangered species list<sup>22</sup>. Many of these species are threatened or endangered due to loss of habitat, including the dewatering of streams, rivers, and riparian areas.

**We ask the Arizona Legislature and Governor Ducey to support strong protections for federal, state, and local public lands, including the provisions of President Biden’s 30 by 30 America the Beautiful proposal and begin working with Tribal nations, the State, and Federal Government to prioritize restoring Tribal homelands. We also ask the state to establish a state level endangered species program that will actively protect species not covered by the federal Endangered Species Act. In addition, we ask the Legislature to establish a state environmental policy act requiring state, local, and other government entities to assess the impacts of proposed state or local government actions on the environment before committing to a course of action, to make these impacts known to the public, to allow public input into the process, to propose means to reduce or eliminate adverse environmental impacts resulting from state or local government actions, and to provide robust consultation with Native American Tribes.**

**Supporters include the following groups:**

- African American Christian Clergy Coalition
- Arizona Climate Action Coalition
- Arizona Faith Network
- Arizona Interfaith Power & Light
- Black Mesa Trust
- Cherishing Creation Collaborative
- Chispa Arizona
- Christian Church in Arizona
- Coalition for Sonoran Desert Protection
- Defend Our Future
- Desert Southwest Conference United Methodist Women
- Elders Action Network - Southern Arizona Chapter (EAN SoAZ)
- Elders Climate Action
- Great Old Broads for Wilderness, Middle Gila Broadband
- Great Old Broads for Wilderness, Sonoran Broadband

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<sup>21</sup> <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/09/29/climate/nyt-climate-newsletter-extinction.html>

<sup>22</sup> <https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/report/species-listings-by-state?stateAbbrev=AZ&statusCategory=Listed&s8fid=112761032792&s8fid=112762573902>

- Great Old Broads for Wilderness, Tucson Region
- Great Old Broads for Wilderness, Yavapai-Prescott Broadband
- Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Phoenix
- Kids Climate Action Network
- Mi Familia Vota
- Sema Foundation
- Sierra Club - Grand Canyon Chapter
- Southwest Conference United Church of Christ
- St. Teresa of Ávila Catholic Community
- The Episcopal Diocese of Arizona
- Tó Nizhóní Ání
- Union of Concerned Scientists
- United Methodist Women of the Desert Southwest Conference
- Vote Solar
- Western Watersheds Project
- WildEarth Guardians
- Yuma Audubon Society

**Supporters include the following elected officials:**

- Becky Daggett, Vice-Mayor of Flagstaff
- Adam Shimoni, Flagstaff City Councilmember
- Corey Woods, Mayor of Tempe
- Lauren Kuby, Tempe City Councilmember
- Regina Romero, Mayor of Tucson
- Arizona Representative Richard Andrade
- Arizona Representative Andrés Cano
- Arizona Representative Mitzi Epstein
- Arizona Representative Judy Schwiebert
- Arizona Representative Christian Solorio
- Arizona Senator Juan Jose Mendez
- Arizona Senator Martín Quezada
- Arizona Senator Stephanie Stahl-Hamilton
- Arizona Senator Victoria Steele



