



INSPIRING AMERICANS TO PROTECT WILDLIFE FOR OUR CHILDREN'S FUTURE.

Fact Sheet

CONFRONTING GLOBAL WARMING



The Path Forward: Comprehensive Energy Legislation in the Wake of the BP Oil Disaster

With oil gushing into the waters of the Gulf of Mexico and our gasoline money flowing to hostile nations, it is time for a new American energy policy. As the U.S. Senate prepares to act on an energy bill, we must not squander the opportunity to finally put America on the path to a clean energy economy. New energy legislation must deal with the immediate impacts of the BP oil spill and hold energy companies responsible for cleaning up the pollution they dump in our water and emit into our air. **Congressional leaders have a clear and stark choice: either take significant action to break our addiction to oil, boost our economy, and confront climate change, or side with Big Oil and other corporate polluters to continue business as usual.**

Only a comprehensive climate and energy bill that includes limits on carbon pollution can put in place the incentives needed to create the jobs and energy security that are essential to our future prosperity. The Senate must pass a bill that contains aggressive steps to deal with the immediate crisis in the Gulf and address our underlying problem of oil dependence. The path forward should draw on existing bills, many of which were developed in a bipartisan manner, and be completed this summer. Such legislation should focus on the following four key goals:

Respond to the Tragedy in the Gulf

The BP oil spill disaster has made it clear that we do not have sufficient laws in place to protect people and wildlife from the impacts of our oil addiction. We need the means to make people harmed by the spill whole, fully restore damaged ecosystems, hold oil companies responsible for their actions, and give citizens the opportunity to protect themselves. A comprehensive energy and climate bill should address this tragedy and make reforms to ensure this doesn't happen again, including key provisions to:

- Raise liability limits on damages from oil spills, increase the amount oil corporations pay into the Oil Spill Liability Trust Fund, and remove the limit on the amount of the fund that can be used for any single oil pollution event.
- Overturn the Supreme Court's 2008 Exxon Valdez decision limiting the punitive damages citizens can impose on negligent corporations.
- Fundamentally reform oil and gas regulatory agencies and regulations for both on and off-shore drilling.
- Apportion a percentage of offshore revenues for grants to all coastal states for the protection, restoration and maintenance of ocean, coastal and Great Lakes ecosystems.

Additional legislative action should make long-term investments in the restoration and protection of Gulf Coast habitats and the Mississippi Delta. *For more on NWF's recommendations for a broad legislative response to the BP Oil Spill, go to <http://www.nwf.org/Oil-Spill/On-the-Ground/Legislative-Response-to-the-BP-Oil-Spill.aspx>*

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Reverse Our Oil Dependence

The United States consumes more than 20% of the world's oil, but has less than 2% of the world's oil reserves. Without a major change in our energy policy, our dependence on oil means that we will continue to send hundreds of billions of dollars of our hard-earned wealth to other countries every year and unnecessarily expose our nation to economic, national security, and environmental risks.

Congress should set an ambitious oil savings target that requires the President to use all the tools at his disposal to reduce our oil consumption by at least 3 million barrels per day by 2020 and 8 million barrels per day by 2030. These reductions can be achieved through a number of measures that:

- Require our automobiles and trucks to become increasingly cleaner and more efficient.
- Aggressively deploy electric vehicles and use natural gas to power more of our trucks.
- Improve transportation planning; boost transit and high speed rail to cut oil use while spurring local economic growth.
- Invest in second-generation advanced biofuels.
- Make buildings and homes more energy efficient.

By investing our oil dollars in these American solutions instead, we not only reverse our devastating dependence on oil but also boost our economic recovery, reverse our trade deficit, transform our manufacturing competitiveness, and create hundreds of thousands of new jobs.

Hold Polluters Accountable

A firm limit on global warming pollution – that cuts pollution 20 percent by 2020 and over 80 percent by mid-century – is critical to protecting wildlife and future generations from the most destructive impacts of climate change. It is also essential to ensuring the economy-wide innovation and robust private investment necessary to move America beyond dangerous fossil fuels, capture new energy and transportation jobs, and make our economy globally competitive in the years to come.

Comprehensive legislation must include key provisions to spur an effective and fair transition to a clean energy economy, while also addressing the effects of warming that may last for generations. This includes investment to:

- Achieve our nation's pollution-reduction and oil savings goals.
- Assist consumers, affected workers, and manufacturers in the transition to a clean energy economy.
- Promote and invest in sustainable agriculture and forests, both at home and abroad.
- Protect our natural resources from the impacts of global warming.
- Support an educated citizenry to make better, more informed decisions about their energy sources.
- Facilitate a global solution to the climate crisis.



Expand Clean Energy Production and Improve Energy Efficiency

Comprehensive climate and energy legislation must promote significant gains in energy efficiency and rapid expansion of renewable energy generation. This will also require investment in the technologies needed to connect these unlimited power sources with the everyday needs of American citizens. In doing so, it is critically important to learn from past mistakes and ensure robust protections for wildlife and habitat, which will provide more certainty towards public acceptance, and ultimately drive more clean power generation.

To achieve these goals, Congress must include in comprehensive legislation provisions that:

- Establish a robust federal Renewable Electricity Standard that is strong enough to significantly enhance what existing state standards are already achieving.
- Establish an ambitious electricity efficiency resource standard and require that one-third of any allowances allocated to electric and gas local distribution companies are used for energy efficiency improvements.
- Secure long-term tax benefit and treasury loan and grant options for wind, solar, and geothermal energy development – including utility scale development, distributed generation, offshore wind, and projects on already-disturbed lands.
- Provide strong and consistent research, development, and demonstration funding for new and unproven technologies in order to fine-tune the technologies that will increase the competitiveness of certain forms of renewable energy generation and transmission.
- Provide guidance and resources necessary for Mineral Management Services within the Department of Interior to address the great opportunities of offshore wind energy.

Together, the provisions outlined here will make great strides toward confronting our dangerous addiction to fossil fuels. Now is not the time to promote the inadequate half measures of the past. The failings of the status quo are literally right before our eyes as the Gulf tragedy continues to unfold. Polling consistently shows that the American people understand that a comprehensive energy and climate package is needed to respond to the immediate tragedy, move us away from oil dependence, and send a clear economic signal to move the U.S. to a clean energy economy.

National Wildlife Federation believes the time is now to solve the problems created by our current energy policies and advance comprehensive reforms that will create jobs, make the U.S. more secure, and protect our environment. Failure is not an option - the price is too great, and the opportunities too huge.