

Resource Guide

Passion for the Planet



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Introduction

Welcome to the Passion for the Planet resource and education guide!

For so many people, including us at AFH, climate change is both a concern, and something that can feel overwhelming to address. Climate change and environmental issues impact everyone on Earth, regardless of their race, age, background, or country of origin. With a challenge that impacts the whole planet, figuring out how to make a positive change is an immense undertaking. In an age of misinformation, even identifying what's true and what's false can be a massive task.

However, Athletes for Hope believes that the first steps towards solving a problem can make the biggest impact. With the biggest issues, the first step is to find the ways that we can help. Often, that means taking the time to learn and reflect.

This resource is for those who are passionate about making change, and empowerment through education. You'll find information about what climate change really means, different ways to address environmental concerns, discussion of the intersection of sports and climate change, and some ways that you can take action.

At Athletes for Hope, education is the root of what we do - we deeply believe in supporting the work of others by providing opportunities to learn and grow. Coming together as a team is a powerful thing - let's learn and take action together.

With gratitude and courage,
Athletes for Hope

Learn

First things first: what is climate change?

[Climate change](#) is defined as the long-term alterations to both normal weather patterns and temperature. This can mean unpredictability in weather, and damaging natural disasters like floods, hurricanes, and storms. Climate change is currently largely caused by human activities that trap greenhouse gasses in the atmosphere, which in turn traps extra heat from the sun. Human activities like burning fossil fuels, natural gas, or coal have all impacted the earth's temperature, causing it to gradually rise.

Fact check: Climate change is a natural process that has occurred since before humans' use of fossil fuels; when it occurs naturally, it is a slow process lasting hundreds of years. However, our activity has been the cause of it happening at a significantly increased rate.

When people talk about environmental impact, they might talk about a few different ways to quantify it by citing [GSG emissions](#). Emissions: The United Nations and other major international organizations look at the amount of greenhouse gas emissions into the atmosphere. This is one way to look at how much a country or place might be impacting climate change.

Another way to quantify that impact of climate change is by looking at [changes in temperature](#). This is important because global changes in temperature have significant impacts on weather patterns, including increasing likelihood of natural disasters. While 1 degree Celsius might not seem like a lot, it means that detrimental weather changes can occur on earth, which threatens lives, economies, and health.



So, what does it mean when we try to find ways to address the impacts of climate change?

[Climate action](#) or environmental advocacy refers to ways that individuals, communities, organizations, or nations act to reduce greenhouse gas emission, as well as increase practices that are more environmentally sustainable. Basically, climate action can refer to both preventative and reactive actions.

Climate action can look like a lot of different things. It encompasses all advocacy around climate change, including policy, practices, research, activism, and community organizing. There are so many ways to advocate for environmental protection, and all are important in order to come together and approach this issue.

Although all people are impacted by climate change, some groups or demographics are at a higher risk because of social and cultural factors. More specifically, people who are low-income, women and girls, and people of color are more likely to be negatively affected by the

consequences of climate change. Research has consistently found that climate change most dramatically impacts groups that are already marginalized by social or cultural determinants. People of color are [disproportionately affected](#) by pollution, rising ocean levels, and natural disasters. In the United States, this is largely due to historical factors, such as federal housing policies.

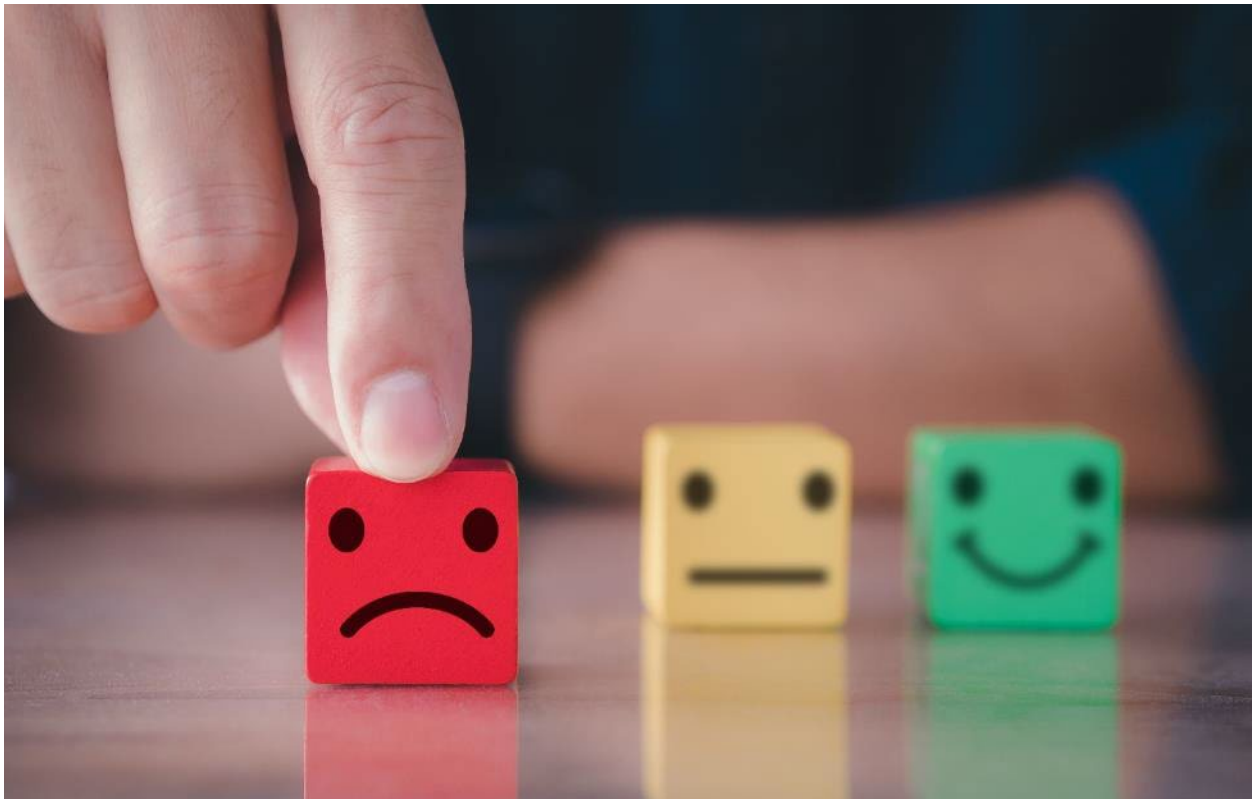
This has led to climate action to address the unjust consequence that climate change has on specific populations. This intersection of advocacy is called [environmental justice](#). Environmental justice is the “*all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income with respect to the development, implementation and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations and policies.*” This means that no population should bear a disproportionate burden from the impacts of climate change.



This is A LOT.

It is! You're not alone in feeling anxiety, stress, fear, or concern about climate change. In fact, [climate anxiety](#) has been identified as a real, and common, thing. Climate anxiety refers to the significant link between climate change and its detrimental impact on mental health. Climate anxiety has been referenced and discussed in peer-reviewed sources, and more and more therapists have reported hearing this as a common and consistent concern among patients.

Remember, these are real and valid ways to respond to a huge issue - it's okay to feel this way, and [you're not alone](#). If you feel increasingly stressed or anxious about this topic, please reach out to others to talk about it or seek support from a professional source (text *CONNECT* to 741741 for 24/7 access to support for anxiety!).



Game Plan

When you think about who some key players are in climate action, you may think about scientists, researchers, policy makers, or activists. **However, athletes have an incredible opportunity in this space as well!**

So, what do sports have to do with climate change or climate action?

Sports and recreation actually have a *huge* impact on the planet. Although you might not think it, the ecological footprint of sports is immense. Consider all the logistical elements of a game or competition: the travel, the equipment, the uniforms, even the field or ice rink. All of these have an impact.

Travel	Competition often means travel - whether it's driving to a Little League game, or going to the Olympics, sports require people to travel to come together. Air travel is a top polluter and requires substantial fossil fuels. For example, during the 2018-2019 season, NBA games and training required 1.3 million miles of travel for athletes and team staff. In fact, traveling for sports is responsible for .6-.8% of all global emissions. While transportation is essential to sport, it's also a huge contributor to pollution. To combat this, some leagues have begun to restructure game schedules to minimize required travel (think baseball-style schedules!).
Equipment & Apparel	A critical component of sport (or any recreational exercise) are the uniforms or sports apparel needed to perform. Whether it's jerseys for a whole team, running shoes, or the equipment needed, to create all of these things requires energy, water, and means of distribution. To create one t-shirt can take up to 700 gallons of water - now imagine all the clothing needed for a single team! Many leagues and teams are beginning to commit to being more environmentally conscious, and pledging to use more sustainable practices. In 2019, the NHL pledged to use more recycled materials to create jerseys , and increase environmentally friendly practices to create their apparel.
Facilities & Fields	From land use and maintenance, to cleanup from tailgates, sports facilities can create a huge amount of waste, and use up sizable amounts of energy. In 2015, 9.1 million square kilometers of Canadian land were taken up by golf courses. To combat the amount of land and energy these facilities require, many stadiums are now incorporating solar panels and using other sources of renewable energy. For example, the MLB's environmental initiative has meant that more and more stadiums are utilizing things like LED lighting, and recycling/composting .

How will this impact what sports look like in the future?

Ultimately, this depends on what steps we can take now. The only thing that we know now that it will, undoubtedly, impact sports in the future. Sustainability in athletics is more than a fad or trend - it's a new reality that teams and leagues need to adapt to. The way we play and compete isn't sustainable. Unless we can prepare and change our current practices, we'll continue to contribute to the environmental damage.

The truth is, we *can* make change! By adapting our habits, using our voices to add to a global conversation, and encouraging others to join in, we can make sports more sustainable and environmentally friendly. Major leagues are already taking steps to integrate climate-friendly practices. While the steps that we take might feel small, they can quickly add up - and using our voice to amplify environmental justice is a critical part of that.



Kickoff and Action

What work has already been done by athletes? Who is leading the call to action?

There are so many incredible athletes, of all levels and backgrounds, who have already found this area to be a priority and a passion.

[Chris Dickerson](#) is a retired MLB baseball player, and the founder of Players for the Planet. Dickerson was inspired to create opportunities for athletes to unite and create positive change for the planet. From making change through sustainable food practices, to eliminating plastics in stadiums, Dickerson is a leader in athlete-led environmentalism.

[Lewis Pugh](#) is a long-distance swimmer and ocean advocate. Pugh was the first person to successfully complete a long-distance swim in every ocean on Earth, and used his experience in the water to push for action against climate change. Pugh has not only used his voice as the United Nations Patron of the Oceans, but also organized “[protest swims](#), as a plea to save our seas.”

[Eliza McCartney](#) is an Olympian from New Zealand, who chose to change her path after learning more about the impact that climate change has (and will) have on the environment. In addition to using her platform as an Olympian to share ways to practice environmental advocacy, she also chose to pursue a degree in Environmental Science. About her decision,

McCartney has said, “I had to be part of the change - suddenly it felt morally wrong to not take action.”

[Caroline Gleich](#) is a professional skier, mountaineer, and environmental activist. Using her experience from her outdoor sport, she shares how climate change is making an immediate impact on forests, mountains, and snowy areas. Gleich has spoken out about her experience seeing ice caps melting on Everest, and encouraged people to make changes towards more sustainable daily routines. Gleich has become an advocate for the skiing community to take greater measures to protect the environment.

[Lauri Markkanen](#) is a Finland-born basketball player in the NBA, who has publicly spoken about the actions he’s taken towards more sustainable practices, and environmental advocacy. Markkanen has said that the birth of his son in 2018 was largely the push for his changes to more eco-friendly practices and products. He has used his platform to share ways for people to get involved - whether by signing a petition, or changing their diets.

If you’re looking to learn more about the work of athlete-founded or led organizations, check out some of our favorites like [Players for the Planet](#), [Protect Our Winters](#), and [Earth Day’s Athletes for the Earth](#).

What are some things that I can do as an individual athlete?

Although we just shared the work of prominent and public figures, remember that you don't need to have a huge following or platform to make a difference! Any and all action that works towards solving the problem is crucial.

Think

Start to consider ways that you use energy, water, or materials during your day. Some examples like using plastic bags to put dirty clothes from practice in, taking long showers, or using single-use containers for meals. Think through your schedule, and identify everything that you need to completely do it.

Change

Looking at your day, where can you make small changes to practice more sustainability? It might mean saving all clothes from multiple workouts to do laundry, instead of running the washing machine for a single outfit. It could mean utilizing a reusable water bottle, rather than a plastic one. It could even be starting to find athletic brands that use environmentally conscious practices to create clothes! Remember, you don't have to get it perfectly every single day - give yourself time to bring these positive practices into your routine.

Amplify

Remember, your voice is powerful - and this includes using it to advocate for your greater community! If you have the ability to reach out to your local political representatives, write a letter or email and urge them to take action. Participate in a local effort to clean up a public space. Amplifying your voice and passion about this subject allows others to listen, learn, and join in.



What are some things I can do with my team?

Think

Brainstorm as a team. What do you and your teammates care about, or can unite on when it comes to environmental advocacy: climate justice and equity? Sustainable food practices? Minimizing fossil fuel use? Take time to have a conversation, and allow everyone to share what inspires them to take action. By having a discussion, you can get a better sense of what should be focused on, and what people are passionate about.

Change

Acting together, start to externally communicate what you hope to accomplish, and why. Some ideas for making change happen could be:

- Asking your organization to switch to using environmentally-friendly clothing for uniforms and practice gear.
- Organizing a carpool to and from games to minimize fossil fuel reliance.
- Using sustainable and low-impact products in your facilities, like microbead-free body wash, or LED lighting.
- Signing a petition as a group for your community leaders to take action against climate change.

Amplify

Share what you've accomplished with your larger sport community. Take time to reach out to other teams, and share what steps you took to make change. By connecting with others, you can act as a catalyst for teams to be more sustainable in their energy and resource usage.



What are some actions I can take with my organization, school, or in my community?

Think

By yourself or with your teammates, think about some of the issues that you see in your community or organization. Is there a current event that you want to respond to? Is there an area that is disproportionately impacted by climate change or pollution? After identifying the area, think about who you want to advocate to. It could be a legislator, an agency, or your sport's governing body. During this part of the process, identifying the "why" and "who" will allow you to take effective action further down the road.

Change

Organize, organize, organize! Make the person(s) listen by joining voices together. This could mean taking action like organizing a protest or a walk. It could look like going to meet a policymaker as a team. It could even be creating a pledge for other people in your community to sign. Whatever you choose to do, make sure that it's accessible to others to join in.

Amplify

Remember that this isn't a sprint - it's a marathon. Keep following up with your larger efforts, and consider new ways to engage others. It's okay for a project to take a break, as long as you can come back to it, and keep going.



Citations and Resources

Resources:

- [Sierra Club](#): fact sheets and advocacy infographics.
- [Ocean Conservancy](#): “take action” page with ideas, links, and policy resources.
- [Uplift Climate](#): information and environmental justice resources.

Citations/References:

- National Geographic, [“Climate Change” encyclopedic entry](#).
- UN Environment Programme, [“Climate Action”](#) initiative and information, including reports.
 - UN EP, [“State of the Climate” report](#)
- EPA, [“Greenhouse Gases”](#)
- EPA, [“Environmental Justice”](#)
- Journal of Anxiety Disorders, [“Climate Anxiety: Psychological Responses to Climate Change”](#)
- NPR, [“Anxiety from climate change isn’t going away - and here’s how to manage it”](#)
- Princeton Student Climate Initiative, [“Racial Disparities and Climate Change”](#)
- NC State University, [“Sports and the Environment: What’s the Connection?”](#)
- Aspen Institute, [“How Climate Change is Affecting Sports Around the World.”](#)
- [“Ecological Footprint of Sport,”](#) *The Ball is In Y(our) court: Social Change though and Beyond Sport*.
- Global Sports Institute at Arizona State University, [“Sports Leagues Pushing for Greater Sustainability”](#)
- *Environmental Science & Technology*, [COVID-19 Disruption Demonstrates Win-Win Climate Solutions for Major League Sports](#)



Get Involved. Be Inspired.

Athletes for Hope reaches millions of people through its network of athletes, charities, foundations, leagues, teams, and many others. Join the movement.

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