

NEHA NEWS

NEHA Receives ecoAmerica Climate Leadership Award



The National Environmental Health Association (NEHA) was honored to be one of nine recipients of the Climate Leadership Award (<https://ecoamerica.org/nine-organizations-receive-climate-leadership-awards-at-acls19/>) presented by ecoAmerica at the American Climate Leadership Summit 2019 in Washington, DC, May 1–2. The other honorees included the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church–Western Episcopal District, Alliance of Nurses for Healthy Environments, American Public Health Association, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Climate Resolve, Physicians for Social Responsibility, United Church of Christ, and a multi-stakeholder effort with Salt Lake City, Park City, Summit County, Utah Climate Action Network, and Utah Clean Energy.

The award recognizes NEHA's commitment to work towards 100% clean energy by 2030, which was formalized in a declaration issued by NEHA in November 2018. The declaration is included below and can be viewed online at https://neha.org/sites/default/files/publications/position-papers/NEHA-Clean-Energy-By-2030-Declaration_0.pdf.

NEHA is grateful to ecoAmerica for the award and recognition.

NEHA Declaration on 100% Clean Energy by 2030

The National Environmental Health Association (NEHA) recognizes climate change as a worldwide environmental health challenge that detrimentally affects the health and safety of individuals and communities. Climate change alters our environmental health—the quality of air, food, and water in the communities where we live, work, and play. Environmental health professionals improve and protect the public's health and create and sustain healthy communities. Our responsibility is to build the capacity of environmental health professionals to address the health effects of climate change. We define climate change as any significant change in climate trends and measures lasting for an extended period of time, such as changes in temperature, precipitation, or wind patterns. Climate change poses an increased risk in changing sea levels, water temperatures, and water chemistry; coastal flooding and erosion; the expansion of the range of disease vectors; the geographic spread of tropical diseases to new areas; and prolonged droughts with associated effects on crops, water resources, and wildfires.

We are compelled to act because carbon pollution is warming our planet and profoundly affecting the U.S. and the world. According to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the surface temperature of the earth has risen at a rate of approximately 0.17 °C per decade since 1970. Increasing temperatures pose the greatest threat to the environment and human health due to impaired air quality and heat-related illnesses in vulnerable populations. The human, environmental, and economic costs of increasing droughts, floods, wildfires, extreme weather, and rising sea levels can be measured in lost lives, higher food prices, poorer health, and billions of dollars in disaster relief. Human activity contributes to these threats and humans can solve this challenge. We have an obligation to act today on climate change and build a sustainable future for our children. We can choose clean energy and use it efficiently. U.S. leadership can help the world meet these challenges with innovative solutions. We must start with mitigating our own climate impact.

Therefore, NEHA is committed to work towards 100% clean energy use by 2030. We will employ administrative, educational, engineering, and fiscal measures to meet this goal. These measures will:

Demonstrate Leadership: Environmental health professionals are influencers in their local communities and professional networks. They have a solemn responsibility to engage with federal, state, and local influencers to report on the needs of the communities they serve and to be the voice of their communities on all environmental health concerns.

Create a Positive Energy Future: Climate change solutions need to promote abundant clean energy, avoid costly carbon pollution, and provide choices in affordable energy. Solutions will help Americans save money by making homes, buildings, and transportation more energy efficient (e.g., to incorporate green space and other technologies into the built environment to help reduce urban heat island effects).

Improve People's Health: Solutions need to clean the air, improve land and water quality, and provide healthy food choices. They need to combat the devastating health effects of climate change and reduce mortality, injury, and illness associated with increased pulmonary diseases, extreme weather events, and increased vector populations.

Build Shared and Sustainable Prosperity: Climate solutions need to create American jobs and a sustainable economy that supports better lives and livelihoods today and for generations to come. They need to also ensure a just transition for communities negatively affected by America's shift to cleaner fuels.

Prepare for Harmful Effects: As we begin to reverse the climate crisis, restore the natural environment, and build a better future, we must protect families, communities, and livelihoods from the harmful effects we are already experiencing from climate change.

Involve All Americans: All of us must have a say in decisions that affect our lives. Special efforts should be made to include youth and vulnerable communities in crafting solutions and setting policy. 🐼