



Policy Title: Climate Change Policy Statement

Date Last Updated: November 13, 2023

Friends of the Kaw Position on Climate Change:

Friends of the Kaw affirms and acknowledges that climate change is real, human-caused, and impacting many facets of modern life due largely to connections to the changing water cycle. Climate change continues to significantly and negatively impact the Kansas River and has created a crisis for the river, the broader ecosystem, and river users. The climate crisis in the Great Plains will largely manifest as higher air temperatures connected to longer, more severe droughts punctuated by extreme (heavy) rain events ([EPA Website](#)). Changes to patterns of floods and droughts not only impact the timing and delivery of water quantity to the Kansas River, but will also alter water quality through changes in sediment and nutrients. The impact of these water quantity and quality shifts is being magnified by land use choices, including increased urban sprawl, agricultural practices that reduce soil health, and elimination of wetlands and connections to floodplains, all of which increase overland runoff and water pollution. Given these connections to water resources in our region, Friends of the Kaw recognizes the need to engage in advocacy and education relating to the climate crisis.

As a water-focused, environmental non-profit, we recognize the seriousness of climate change and its impact on Kansas' water resources including the Kansas River. Climate change poses a documented threat to the availability, quality, and accessibility of water, which in turn affects the health and well-being of people, ecosystems, and economies from the scale of local communities to the State of Kansas to the Earth system. We further recognize the disproportionate impacts of climate change on marginalized communities because of existing vulnerabilities, historical patterns of inequity, socioeconomic disparities, and systemic environmental injustices ([EPA Website](#)). Therefore, we are committed to taking proactive measures to reduce the carbon footprint of Friends of the Kaw while prioritizing equity,



including promoting policies that support climate resilience and advocating for policies that address water-related climate change at the local and state levels.

Our climate change policy includes the following principles:

- Reducing our carbon footprint: We will work to reduce Friends of the Kaw's greenhouse gas emissions (and carbon footprint) by (1) minimizing waste in our operations and paddle trips, (2) promoting sustainable transportation and carpooling, (3) prioritize sourcing food and supplies for our paddle trips and events from local businesses and/or businesses that have demonstrated a commitment to sustainability in their supply chain, and (4) eliminating single-use plastics and other packaging material from our events to the greatest extent possible.
- Promoting climate resilience: We will advocate for increased climate resilience in Kansas and beyond by (1) supporting adaptive management strategies that uphold environmental flows in the Kansas River, (2) promoting sustainable strategies for groundwater use across the state, particularly in the Kansas River basin, (3) supporting partners in advocating for improved land use strategies (e.g., regenerative agriculture) and supporting strategic development that mitigates stormwater impact across all areas of the watershed (e.g., green roofs, stream buffers), and (4) emphasizing sustainable stormwater management.
- Advocating for policy changes: We will engage with local and state-level policy makers to advocate for policies that address climate change, including (1) supporting the sustainable, environmentally beneficial development of green energy and water infrastructure, (2) encouraging water-efficient technology adoption, and (3) advocating for policies that encourage floodplain reconnection to the Kansas River.
- Supporting natural climate solutions: We support management options that harness the power of nature in mitigating climate change impacts, such as creating wetlands for water storage, protecting existing natural ecosystems from development, and improved management of existing



green infrastructure. We do not, in principle, support the creation of new hard infrastructure projects (e.g., dams, aqueducts) as a solution to managing the increased variation in river flows under a changing climate. We do not and will not support any large-scale arrangements that constitute inter-basin water transfers out of the Kansas River watershed.

- Educating and raising public awareness: Will we educate the public about the impacts of climate change on water resources and the importance of taking action to mitigate those most likely to be affected by changing climate. Examples of education and policy priorities include, but are not limited to, resilient stormwater codes and policies, stream setbacks, wastewater treatment facility upgrades, and private property stormwater management. We will also work to build public support for policies and practices that promote climate resilience.

We will use these guiding principles to prioritize, educate, and advocate for our work related to the Kansas River. By adopting these principles, we can play an important role in addressing the challenges of climate change and ensuring future generations have access to a clean and healthy Kansas River and its connected water resources.