

# Reducing Greenhouse Gas Emissions on the COLORADO PLATEAU

## Why Are We Doing This?

Human-caused climate change is affecting the weather and causing extreme hardships across the globe. We must reduce carbon emissions and bolster community resilience or things will get worse, according to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.<sup>1</sup> As a conservation organization operating in a region facing increasing drought, wildfire, water shortages, and longstanding environmental injustices, the Grand Canyon Trust is determined to work toward a carbon neutral Colorado Plateau by 2035.

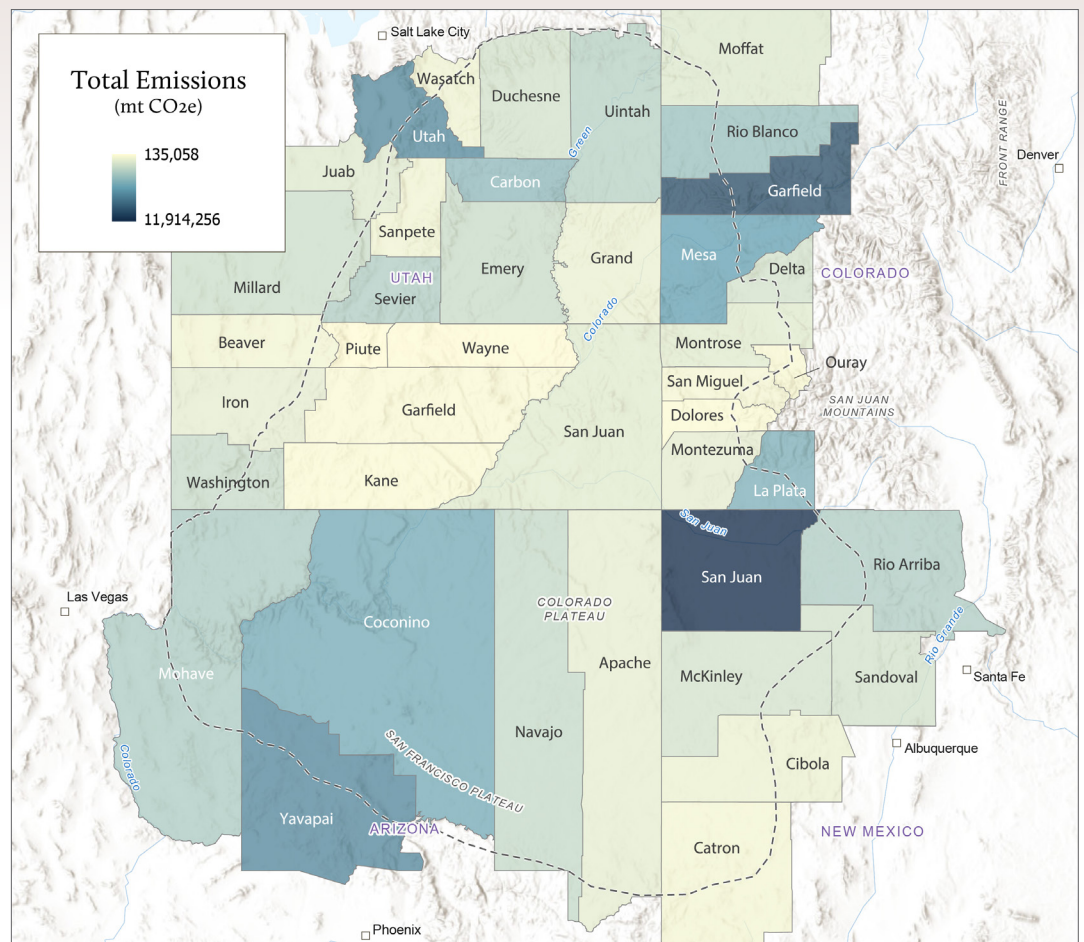
## Total Emissions

106.5

million metric tons  
of carbon dioxide  
equivalent emissions

In 2018, 41 counties across the Colorado Plateau produced about twice the emissions of New York City.<sup>2</sup>

Separately, if you counted all emissions from electricity generated on the Colorado Plateau (and used locally as well as in distant cities like Phoenix and Las Vegas), those emissions alone would account for 71% of Colorado Plateau emissions.



Colorado Plateau 2018 total emissions by county

<sup>1</sup> Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. "Headline Statements from the Summary for Policymakers." [https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg1/downloads/report/IPCC\\_AR6\\_WGI\\_Headline\\_Statements.pdf](https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg1/downloads/report/IPCC_AR6_WGI_Headline_Statements.pdf).

<sup>2</sup> In 2016, New York City emitted 52 million metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent. <https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/sustainability/downloads/pdf/publications/GHG%20Inventory%20Report%20Emission%20Year%202016.pdf>.

## Top Emitters on the Colorado Plateau

26%

### Electricity Use

Residential and commercial energy use in homes, businesses, and industrial complexes

25%

### Transportation

Fuel burned in cars, trucks, buses, and other forms of transportation

18%

### Oil and Gas

Extraction, processing, and delivery of oil and gas (77% of these emissions came from oil and gas wells)



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## Top Priority Areas for Emissions Reductions

### Electricity Generation and Infrastructure

As a net exporter of energy, the Colorado Plateau must move away from fossil fuels and toward clean and renewable energy while ensuring a just transition for fossil fuel industry workers.

### Oil and Gas Reform

Reducing emissions from oil and gas operations through federal, state, and tribal jurisdictions will help address health, economic, and climate inequities in the Southwest by providing cleaner air and new job opportunities.

### Innovation, Technology, and Environmental Justice

Initiatives that empower communities to make meaningful emissions reductions must innovate to diversify the economy and address longstanding inequities, such as limited economic opportunities, that have perpetuated the disproportionate impact of mineral extraction on frontline communities, including many Indigenous communities.

## Policy Levers to Reduce Emissions

### Electricity Generation

By supporting state and federal incentives for clean and renewable energy generation (excluding new nuclear power plants), we can take a big chunk out of Colorado Plateau emissions. Supporting national clean electricity goals and prioritizing frontline communities are important pieces of the puzzle.

### Infrastructure

We must move toward carbon-free power as quickly as possible and ensure that frontline communities don't bear the brunt of mineral extraction. To increase renewables, we need to minimize mining more raw minerals by focusing on reusing, repurposing, repairing, and recycling materials needed for renewable energy. Federal assets should be leveraged to provide electricity, water, and other basic amenities to all communities.

### Oil and Gas Reform

We must prioritize a full suite of oil and gas regulatory reforms, including comprehensive reform of the federal oil and gas leasing process, emissions controls, and funding for the proper cleanup of abandoned oil and gas wells, which has the added benefit of protecting public health.

### Environmental Justice

Frontline communities, including Indigenous communities, are disproportionately impacted by climate change and energy development and must be at the forefront of emissions-reduction strategies. We support legislation that addresses environmental disparities in these communities, including warding off bad policies that further target these communities on the path toward carbon neutrality, reforming the antiquated 1872 Mining Law, and ensuring a just transition for workers in climate-polluting extractive industries.

### Innovation and Technology

Supporting investments in carbon-capture technologies to make this technology more viable in the future will have the long-term benefit of removing carbon from the atmosphere.