

Public History in a Changing Climate: A Reading Guide

Selected Resources on Environmental Sustainability, Climate Change, and Public History

This reading guide, produced by NCPH's Environmental Sustainability Committee in 2026, introduces key scholarship and practical resources that sit at the intersection of public history, climate change, and environmental sustainability. It is intended for public historians, museum professionals, preservationists, students, and educators seeking to understand both the historical dimensions of climate change and the role of public history in supporting the development of more sustainable and resilient communities.

1. Foundations: Public History, Climate Change, and Sustainability

These works introduce the intellectual foundations of environmental sustainability and climate change within public history, exploring why these issues matter to the field and how public historians can contribute to climate conversations.

Conard, Rebecca. "Applied Environmentalism, or Reconciliation among 'the Bios' and 'the Culturals.'" *The Public Historian* 23, no. 2 (2001): 9–18.

Foster, Mark S. "The Automobile in the Urban Environment: Planning for an Energy-Short Future." *The Public Historian* 3, no. 4 (1981): 23–31.

Glassberg, David. "Place, Memory, and Climate Change." *The Public Historian* 36, no. 3 (2014): 17–30.

Glaser, Leah S., ed. "Public History and Environmental Sustainability." Special issue of *The Public Historian* 36, no. 3 (August 2014).

Melosi, Martin V., and Philip V. Scarpino, eds. *Public History and the Environment*. Krieger Publishing, 2004.

Stanton, Cathy, ed. [Public History in a Changing Climate](#), Public History Commons of the National Council on Public History, 2014.

2. Museums, Sustainability, and Institutional Practice

These works examine how museums, historic sites, and other cultural institutions can reduce their environmental impacts while integrating sustainability into organizational planning, operations, and public engagement.

Brophy, Sarah Sutton, and Elizabeth Wylie. *The Green Museum: A Primer on Environmental Practice*. AltaMira Press, 2008.

Cameron, Fiona R., and Brett Neilson, eds. *Climate Change and Museum Futures*. Routledge, 2015.

Harrison, Rodney, and Colin Sterling, eds. *Reimagining Museums for Climate Action*. Museums for Climate Action, 2021.

Merriman, Nick, ed. *Museums and the Climate Crisis*. Routledge, 2024.

3. Environmental Interpretation and Storytelling

These resources explore strategies for interpreting climate change, energy, food, landscapes, trees, science, and other environmental topics in ways that encourage historical understanding, community dialogue, and stewardship.

Cafaro, Philip. "What Should NPS Tell Visitors (and Congress) about Climate Change?" *The George Wright Forum* 29, no. 3 (2012): 287–98.

Glassberg, David. "The Changing Cape: Using History to Engage Coastal Residents in Conversations about Climate Change." *The George Wright Forum* 34, no. 3 (2017): 285–98.

Glaser, Leah S, ed. *Interpreting Energy at Museums and Historic Sites*. Rowman & Littlefield and American Association for State and Local History, 2023.

Glaser, Leah S., ed. "Interpreting Energy at Historic Sites and Museums to Inspire Climate Action." Special Section of *Parks Stewardship Forum* 41, no. 3 (2025).

Glaser, Leah S., and Philip Levy, eds. *Branching Out: The Public History of Trees*. University of Massachusetts Press, 2025.

Martin, Laura J. *Wild by Design: The Rise of Ecological Restoration*. Harvard University Press, 2022.

Moon, Michelle, and Cathy Stanton. *Public History and the Food Movement: Adding the Missing Ingredients*. Routledge, 2017.

Reid, Debra A., Karen-Beth Scholthof, and David Vail. *Interpreting Science at Museums and Historic Sites*. Rowman & Littlefield and American Association for State and Local History, 2023.

Reid, Debra A., and David Vail. *Interpreting the Environment*. Rowman & Littlefield and American Association for State and Local History, 2019.

4. Preservation, Heritage, and Climate Adaptation

These works examine how climate change is reshaping historic preservation and cultural heritage practice, offering approaches for documenting, protecting, and adapting historic places in a changing environment.

Avrami, Erika. *Second-Order Preservation: Social Justice and Climate Action through Heritage Policy*. University of Minnesota Press, 2024.

Barthel-Bouchier, Diane. *Cultural Heritage and the Challenge of Sustainability*. Left Coast Press, 2013.

Berenfeld, Michelle L., ed. "Climate Change and Cultural Heritage." Special section of *The George Wright Forum* 25, no. 2 (2008).

Harrison, Rodney, Sarah Byrne, Anne Clarke, Jodi Frawley, Heather Goodall, Linda Hulse, Jane Lennon, et al., eds. *Heritage Futures: Comparative Approaches to Natural and Cultural Heritage Practices*. UCL Press, 2020.

Holtorf, Cornelius, and Anders Högberg. *Cultural Heritage and the Future*. Routledge, 2021.

Jackson, Mike. "Embodied Energy and Historic Preservation: A Needed Reassessment." *APT Bulletin: The Journal of Preservation Technology* 36, no. 4 (2005).

Longstreth, Richard, ed. *Sustainability and Historic Preservation: Toward a Holistic View*. University of Delaware Press, 2011.

Sharpley, Richard. *Tourism Development and the Environment: Beyond Sustainability?* Routledge, 2009.

Stubbs, Michael. "Heritage-Sustainability: Developing a Methodology for the Sustainable Appraisal of the Historic Environment." *Planning Practice & Research* 19, no. 3 (2004): 285–305.

Wessell, Andrew. "Preserving Regional Heritage in Times of Accelerated Climate Change." *Archival Science* 23, no. 4 (2023): 663–85.

5. Environmental Justice, Indigenous Knowledge, and Community Resilience

These works highlight the importance of environmental justice, Indigenous knowledge systems, and community-centered approaches for understanding the unequal impacts of climate change and developing more inclusive public history practices.

Allison III, James Robert. *Sovereignty for Survival: American Energy Development and Indian Self-Determination*. Yale University Press, 2015.

Goffe, Tao Leigh. *Dark Laboratory: On Columbus, the Caribbean, and the Origins of the Climate Crisis*. Doubleday, 2025.

Kryder-Reid, Elizabeth, and Sarah May, eds. *Toxic Heritage: Legacies, Futures, and Environmental Justice*. Routledge, 2024.

Pellow, David N. *What Is Critical Environmental Justice?* Polity Press, 2018.

Sze, Julie, ed. *Sustainability: Approaches to Environmental Justice and Social Power*. New York University Press, 2018.

Sze, Julie. *Environmental Justice in a Moment of Danger*. University of California Press, 2020.

Whyte, Kyle. *Indigenous Science and Climate Futures*. Yale University Press, 2025.

6. Climate History, Environmental History, and the Anthropocene

These works provide historical context for understanding long-term relationships between people and the environment, the origins of contemporary climate challenges, and the role of history in shaping more sustainable futures.

Caradonna, Jeremy. *Sustainability: A History*. Oxford University Press, 2014.

Coulter, Kimberly, and Christoph Mauch. *The Future of Environmental History: Needs and Opportunities*. Munich: Rachel Carson Center, Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich, 2011.

Frankopan, Peter. *The Earth Transformed: An Untold History*. Alfred A. Knopf, 2023.

Lipsky, David. *The Parrot and the Igloo: Climate and the Science of Denial*. W. W. Norton, 2023.

Manuel, Jeffrey T., and Thomas D. Rogers. *Ethanol: A Hemispheric History for the Future of Biofuels*. University of Oklahoma Press, 2025.

Rhodes, Richard. *Energy: A Human History*. Simon & Schuster, 2018.

7. Digital Resources and Online Projects

These websites, digital projects, podcasts, and multimedia resources provide accessible examples of environmental public history in practice and offer materials for teaching, interpretation, and public engagement.

Christian, David and Bob Bain. [Big History Project](#)

[Climate and Culture](#). National Trust for Historic Preservation

[Climate Change and Sustainability](#). National Trust (UK)

[Climates of Inequality: Stories of Environmental Justice](#). Humanities Action Lab

[Smithsonian Cultural Rescue Initiative](#)

[UNESCO World Heritage Climate Action Resources](#)

8. Reports, Toolkits and Practice Guides

These reports, policy documents, and practical guides offer evidence-based recommendations, planning frameworks, and interpretive tools for incorporating climate resilience and sustainability into public history practice.

Colette, Augustin, ed. [Climate Change and World Heritage: Report on Predicting and Managing Impacts of Climate Change on World Heritage and Strategy to Assist States Parties to Implement Appropriate Management Responses](#). Paris: UNESCO World Heritage Centre, 2007.

Graves, Donna, Elizabeth Villano, with C. Anderson. [History & Hope for Climate Action: An Interpretive Toolkit](#). National Park Service, Climate Change Response Program, Fort Collins, Colorado, 2024.

International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property. [Heritage-Based Climate Action, Conference Report](#). 2024.

McGhie, Henry. [Mobilising Museums for Climate Action: Tools, Frameworks and Opportunities to Accelerate Climate Action in and with Museums](#). Museums for Climate Action, 2021.

National Council on Public History Sustainability Task Force. "[Public History and Environmental Sustainability: A Role for NCPH.](#)" January 2014.

National Park Service. [Climate Change Response Strategy, 2023 Update](#). Washington, DC: National Park Service, 2023.

National Park Service. [Planning for a Changing Climate: Climate-Smart Planning and Management in the National Park Service](#). Fort Collins, CO: National Park Service, 2021.

National Trust for Historic Preservation. "[The Greenest Building: Quantifying the Environmental Value of Building Reuse.](#)" Washington, DC: National Trust for Historic Preservation, 2011.

Holtz, Debra, Adam Markham, Kate Cell, and Brenda Ekwurzel. [National Landmarks at Risk: How Rising Seas, Floods, and Wildfires are Threatening the United States' Most Cherished Sites](#). Union of Concerned Scientists, May 2014.

9. *History@Work* Posts

This is only a small sample of published posts on topics connected to our changing climate and environmental sustainability available through *History@Work*, the peer-edited blog of NCPH. Please search for additional posts using the tags "climate change," "environment," and "sustainability."

[Climate Emergency Series](#), *History@Work*, 2021-2022.

[Interpretation of Climate Change in the National Parks series](#), *History@Work*, 2016.

Glaser, Leah S. "[Public Historians Take on Climate Change.](#)" *History@Work*, April 29, 2012.

Graves, Donna. "[Expanding Historic Narratives to Mobilize Around Our Climate Emergency.](#)" *History@Work*, January 11, 2022.

Jones, Andrea. "[History Makes Climate Change More Personal and Relevant.](#)" *History@Work*, December 5, 2016.

Maxwell, Dillon. "[Leopold's Axe: History as a Tool for Conservation.](#)" *History@Work*, January 9, 2020.

Mullen, Kelsey. "[Continuing the Conversation about Preservation and Climate Change.](#)" *History@Work*, September 11, 2015.