

Rotary Impact

What is Rotary doing about climate change

Rotary International

Rotary is a global network of volunteers from all walks of life who use their vocational skills to change and improve lives and care for the environment. Learn how Rotarians are already fighting climate change: [Rotary](#).

History of Rotary's leadership on climate change

1. Rotary action for the environment was first raised in 1990 by Brazilian Paolo Costa in his year as Rotary International President (RIP). President Costa proposed the Preserve Planet Earth (PPE) Program with its five ambitious, but timely goals for Rotary to claim its place on the world stage of the environmental movement. Read more [here](#)
2. In 2015, the RI Board approved the formation of a Rotary Action Group to focus on the environment: **Environmental Sustainability Rotary Action Group (ESRAG)**. One of ESRAG's six action themes is climate. For more information about ESRAG's commitment to climate, read [here](#).
3. In 2020, PRIP Mark Maloney announced that the Rotary International (RI) and the Board of TRF Trustees had unanimously agreed to a new Environment Area of Focus (AoF). Two of the action goals in this new AoF on climate are.
4. Rotary was represented at the UN Conference of Parties of Climate Change (COP) in recent years. Many senior Rotary leaders have attended several COPs, including: 2021 - PRIP Shekhar Mehta, 2022 - PRIP Jennifer Jones, 2023 – PRIP Gordon McNally, PRIP Barry Rassin, Rotary CEO John Hewko, and RIPE Mario Cesar Martins de Camargo, and 2024 – PRIP Mark

Maloney. At the 2023 COP, RI had a strong presence with a booth and 30 presentations. (Importantly, PRIPs Mehta, Jones, and McNally attended in their capacity as RIP. PRIPs Rassin and Maloney attended as Chair of The Rotary Foundation.)

5. Rotary also invited a number of Rotarians to be Rotary delegates at several COP events. These included past Deans of the Rotary Representative Network, Judith Diment and Peter Kyle, and ESRAG representatives, Karen Kendrick Hands, Christopher Puttock, Yasar Atacik, Mohammed Delaware, Salvador Rico, Mina Venkataraman, and Alberto Palombo.
6. Staff at RI Headquarters have formed a sustainability committee which has a 12 point sustainability plan.
7. Senior Rotary officers have spoken at conferences and seminars about the importance of climate change and how Rotary continues to support climate solutions. For example:
 - a. RIP (2024 2025) Stephanie Urchick has spoken at climate change events e.g. Synergy ESRAG (August 2023)
 - b. PRIP (2017 2018) Ian Riseley who challenged Rotary clubs around the world to plant one tree per member during his Rotary year, has also given many presentations on Rotary's contributions to addressing climate change (e.g. Breakout session at Ricon in Singapore in May 2024)
 - c. PRIP (2018 2019) Barry Rassin, has also given many presentations on climate, in particular in reference to the impact of rising sea levels and increased frequency and severity of extreme weather events in the Caribbean and the low-lying states. (RICON, Toronto 2022)
 - d. PRIPV (2023 2024) Pat Merryweather-Arges (Clean Energy Seminar, 2024)
8. Climate experts have spoken at ESRAG climate events, including Dr Fatih Birol (Executive Director of International Energy Agency), Professor David Karoly (Melbourne University), and Dr Michael Mann (University of Pennsylvania).
9. In October 2024, at a joint meeting of the Rotary International Board of Directors and The Rotary Foundation Trustees, there was an agreement to form a Climate Change Workgroup to research the climate change activities of Rotary, and to investigate the feasibility of forming a Climate Change Taskforce and clarifying its terms of reference. The Workgroup is expected to report to the Board of Directors and Trustees by June 2025.



PRIP Ian Riseley and ESRAG presenters at a breakout session RICON 2024

The Rotary Foundation

The Rotary Foundation provides funding for service projects in seven Areas of Focus (AoF): Peacebuilding and Conflict Prevention; Disease Prevention and Treatment; Water, Sanitation, And Hygiene; Maternal and Child Health; Basic Education and Literacy; Community Economic Development, and Environment.

The Environment AoF was only announced in 2020, yet for the year 2023-2024, 59 Global Grants worth a total of \$59 million were awarded for environment programs. [The Rotary Foundation](#)

Clubs can apply for grants for projects under the [guidelines](#) for the Environment AoF. These guidelines specify 12 Action Goals, two of which specifically refer to climate change, although there may be some connection with other Action Goals. E.g. a project of mangrove restoration may relate to the Action Goal 1 of Restoring land resources, but will also have carbon sequestration outcomes. The two climate-related Action goals are:

Action Goal 4

Climate, energy, and electricity: Addressing the causes of climate change through reductions in the emissions of greenhouse gases and interventions in energy usage

Action Goal 5

Resilience and adaptation: Strengthening the resilience of ecosystems and communities affected by climate change and climate disruption

Environmental Rotary Action Group (ESRAG)

Rotary has a number of Rotary Action Groups (RAGs), which are independent, Rotary-affiliated groups made up of people from around the world who are experts in a field, such as economic development, peace, addiction prevention, the environment, or water. [More](#). There are 26 RAGs worldwide.

ESRAG was formed to empower members of the Rotary Family worldwide to take actions to sustain our environment, in particular to stabilize our climate. ESRAG currently has 2,100+ members worldwide, with 13 regional chapters.

ESRAG organises its activities under six key themes: Biodiversity, **Climate**, Sustainable Living, Food Systems, Pollution, and Circular Economy.

ESRAG Climate Initiatives

Below is a selection of the extensive collection of ESRAG's climate related education resources.

1. Climate Action Policy statement

[ESRAG Climate Policy Statement](#) (released Nov 2022) [video](#)

2. ESRAG Climate Roadmap

[Roadmap](#)

3. Website

- ESRAG [Climate theme](#)
- ESRAG Activities Project Global Impact Map [Activity tracker](#)
 - Maps environmental projects from round the world for Biodiversity, Circular Economy, Climate, Education, Food systems, Operation Pollination, Sustainable Living
 - The tracker has only been open for a few months, but already the following number of Climate projects have reported:
 - 806 projects from India
 - 18 projects from North America
 - 2 projects from the UK
 - 1 project from Africa

4. Resources

- Webinars held weekly [Events - ESRAG](#). Examples of climate theme webinars
 - Solar Safe Water (Gunilla Ostberg)
 - The Million Solar Panels Challenge
 - Refugees and Climate Change (Jules Mongane)
 - Net Zero Connected Communities (Brian Bragington Smith)
 - Clean Energy Seminar (Dr Fatih Birol)
 - Disasters and RAGs DNA RAG (Michael Terrelonge)
 - Climate Innovation Challenge – a program of CAVU (Mercy Wambui)
 - Climate Fresk (Barbara Zitzmann-Tenglemann)
 - Become a Climate Friendly Club (Ludwig Kalthoff)
 - Climate Emergencies (Bonnie Welsh and others)
 - Projects Climate Innovation (Felix Kariuki)
 - Carbon Calculator Launch (Pat Armstrong)
 - Climate Collaborations (Rob Anderson)

- UNEP handbook [ESRAG & UNEP Handbook](#)
- Green Events Handbook [Green events handbook](#)
- iRotree is a Global System for Rotary clubs to report the impact of their environmental projects. [iRotree](#)



5. Taskforces, Initiatives

[Taskforces](#)

Help educate, provide technical assistance, and facilitate new projects and initiatives.

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|--------------------------------|---------------------|
| - Clean Cooking | - Plant Rich Diet |
| - Climate Solutions | - Plastic Solutions |
| - Conserving Glacial Resources | - Pollinators |
| - Food Waste | - Renewable Energy |

[Initiatives](#)

Focused activities that support projects driven by local clubs and districts. [Initiatives](#)

These initiatives connect clubs to share best practices and learn from each other. Examples of Initiatives include

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|---|---------------------------------|
| - Every Club Climate Friendly (includes an online Club Carbon Calculator) | - Lithium-ion Battery Recycling |
| - Flight Carbon Estimator | - Lunch out of Landfill |
| - Habitat Solar | - Million Solar Panels |
| - I Fix the Planet | - Operation Pollination |
| - Refrigerant Solutions | - Solar Safe Water |
| | - Watersheds, Rivers, Oceans |

6. Partners

Rotary works with the following sister organisations, many on climate related projects: [Partners](#)

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|---------------------------------------|---|
| - Project Drawdown | - Global Grant Partners |
| - Tradewater US | - Habitat for Humanity |
| - UNEP (UNEP Handbook) | - Rotary Action Group for Peace |
| - International Bee Rotary Fellowship | - Rotary Climate Action Team (RCAT) Network |
| - DNA Disaster Network of Assistance | - Rotary Synergy Friendship Alliance |
| - Rotary Action Group | - Rotary Fellowship of Urban Gardening |
| - End Plastic Soup | |

7. Projects

- Featured projects can be found at this link: [Projects - ESRAG - Environmental Sustainability Rotary Action Group](#)
- How to plan a project: [Planning a Project - ESRAG - Environmental Sustainability Rotary Action Group](#)
- Resources to help clubs apply for environmental global grants. [Global Grants - ESRAG - Environmental Sustainability Rotary Action Group](#)

8. Education and Training

ESRAG Environmental Ambassadors training course (This course was developed and conducted with 30 Rotarians in 2021 in ESRAG Oceania. It is currently being revised)

Other topics in the ESRAG Explainer Series

- Climate: What were they thinking?
- We need to talk about Climate Part 1. The basics
- We need to talk about Climate Part 2. The science and progress
- How climate change intersects with Rotary's Areas of Focus