

TRAVEL WEEKLY

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HOTELS

Sustainability-minded hotels are staying the course

By Christina Jelski | Mar 17, 2025

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The Palms Hotel & Spa in Miami is a member the Beyond Green network. Photo Credit: The Palms Hotel & Spa

As environmental progress hits headwinds from the Trump administration, the global tourism and hospitality sector is keeping a close eye on potential impact.

But while federal environmental policies are in flux, eco-focused hotels are holding steady to their sustainability commitments. That's true for several members of the [Beyond Green](#) network of properties, part of the Preferred Travel Group of brands.

Nina Boys, vice president of sustainability for Beyond Green, emphasized that during this time of uncertainty, cooperation among like-minded properties and their partners is crucial.

"In an increasingly unpredictable world, bold leadership and community collaboration are more essential now than ever before," Boys said. "We are stronger together than we are alone."

California's [Ranch at Laguna Beach](#), a Beyond Green member, has no plans to alter its environmentally sustainable approach.

"As a property, we keep moving forward," said Kurt Bjorkman, COO of the 97-room property. "And if there is a silver lining in all of this, I think it will be a renewed focus on the importance of sustainability."

Bjorkman said The Ranch will continue to partner with organizations like the [Surfrider Foundation](#) and its [Ocean Friendly Hotels](#) program, which helps properties eliminate single-use plastics and source sustainably from local suppliers.

In Miami, the Beyond Green member [Palms Hotel & Spa](#) remains similarly committed to its environmental mission.

"We've been focused on sustainability since 2010," said Tanja Morariu, director of marketing and head of sustainability at the 247-room property. "For us, we're on this journey no matter what the federal government does, or which party is [in charge]; our values are our values."

The Palms implemented a composting program in November, despite a lack of commercial composting facilities in Florida, and has already diverted 20,000 pounds of waste. "We're continuing with business as usual," Morariu said.

While many Beyond Green properties have maintained clear sustainability messaging, industrywide communication about environmental initiatives has become increasingly nuanced.

Trigger words are being avoided

Jeremy Sampson, CEO of the climate change and socioeconomic equity-focused international nonprofit [The Travel Foundation](#), has seen signs that the industry is adapting its language in response.

"People aren't talking about the 'trigger words,' but that doesn't mean that the existing action and existing commitments are necessarily going away," he said.

He identified phrases such as "climate action" as being "a trigger word for half the country," along with diversity, equity and inclusion, which are both being viewed more as "not business imperative." He cited examples of "climate action" plans created by destinations that were rejected but were then resubmitted as "economic resilience" plans. "That exact plan, with the same budget -- unanimously approved," he said.

This shift in industry language comes as the Trump administration has rapidly realigned priorities, favoring economic and industrial interests over conservation and climate concerns. Some of the recent policy rollbacks have included executive orders expanding timber

production on public lands and eliminating restrictions on single-use plastics. It has also made significant staffing cuts at agencies like the Environmental Protection Agency and the National Park Service.

The latter presents challenges for stakeholders in markets dependent on national park-related tourism.

"It's a shame that organizations that can be natural allies and advocates to suppliers aren't being funded," Sampson said.

Still, hospitality providers operating within national parks are working to maintain consistency for visitors, including their focus on conservation.

Andrew Heltzel, chief commercial officer of the [Xanterra Travel Collection](#), which operates lodging, dining and tour services at national parks like Yellowstone and the Grand Canyon, emphasized the company's commitment to continuity in the face of "an evolving situation."

"We also continue educational opportunities through our partners like [Leave No Trace](#)," he said, referring to the program designed to teach outdoor enthusiasts how to minimize their environmental impact.

Sampson is concerned about the dampened U.S. influence on the environmental issues globally. "Where does this leave the U.S. in that wider conversation, as the world keeps moving forward?" he said.