

An Open Letter from U.S. Scientists Imploring President Biden to End the Fossil Fuel Era

October 7, 2021

President Joseph R. Biden Jr.

1600 Pennsylvania Ave, N.W.

Washington, DC 20001

Dear President Biden,

As U.S. scientists, we write with the utmost alarm about the state of our climate system. As overwhelming evidence shows, the reality of our situation is now so dire that only a rapid phase-out of fossil fuel extraction and combustion can fend off the worst consequences of the climate crisis.

In this time of peril, we call on you to fulfill your campaign pledge to listen to science, take bold action to lead the nation back from the brink of runaway climate chaos, and lead the world in a rapid transition away from fossil fuels. We urge you to:

- Completely stop federally authorized fossil fuel expansion by banning new federal fossil fuel leasing, fracking, and drilling on public lands and waters; directing federal agencies to stop issuing permits for fossil fuel infrastructure projects from pipelines to petrochemical plants; and ending fossil fuel exports and subsidies;
- Declare a climate emergency to reinstate the decades-long ban on crude oil exports, direct a portion of military spending to a rapid construction program of renewable energy projects, and provide loan guarantees to advance a rapid, just buildout of clean renewable energy;
- Abandon industry delay tactics including carbon capture and storage, blue hydrogen, and carbon offsets, that impede the rapid transition to renewable energy and allow the fossil-fuel era to continue. These industry schemes are dangerous distractions.

The people of the United States are already experiencing intensifying climate disasters caused primarily by extracting, transporting, and burning fossil fuels, and the types of disasters we are living through now are certain to get worse - much worse - without emergency action.

Black, Brown, Indigenous and impoverished frontline communities bear the brunt of climate disasters and other fossil fuel industry harms, including air and water pollution that increase the risk of respiratory illnesses, pre-term births, cancer, and premature death.

Unfortunately, despite your campaign pledge to "listen to science" and your declaration that climate change represents an "existential threat," your approach to fossil fuels is inconsistent with the kind of rapid transition away from fossil fuels this emergency demands. Indeed, in its first six months, your administration has taken several steps to continue advancing fossil fuel extraction and use. These include:

- Continuing to approve fracking and drilling permits on federal lands, despite your campaign pledge to ban new oil and gas permitting on public lands and waters;
- Supporting multiple tar sands oil and oil pipelines, including the Dakota Access and Enbridge Line 3 pipelines, despite your power to halt both of these climate-destructive projects;
- Appealing a court order in order to allow fracking in Ohio's Wayne National Forest;
- Advancing a proposal for oil and gas exploration near Dinosaur National Monument in eastern Utah and in the Gulf of Mexico;
- Backing a Trump-era oil project in Alaska that will produce over 100,000 barrels of oil a day for 30 years;
- Supporting public subsidies for fossil fuels through fossil hydrogen, CCS and LNG exports;
- Pressuring OPEC to boost oil production;
- Backing offset schemes that would allow the fossil fuel industry to justify continuing emissions because of claimed emissions reductions elsewhere in the economy.

UN Secretary-General António Guterres has declared the newest findings of the recent IPCC report a code red for humanity. We urge you to convene world leaders around a shared vision for moving humanity off fossil fuels and avoiding carbon offset schemes and fossil-fuel industry delay tactics.

Our chances for avoiding irreversible and uncontrollable climate chaos diminish daily. We implore you, on behalf of and for the love of all life on Earth, to respond to the greatest threat ever to face our species and lead the transition away from fossil fuels that humanity desperately needs.

Sincerely,

Scientists joining this letter do so in their individual capacities and not on behalf of the institutions with which they are affiliated.