

CLIMATE JUSTICE ALLIANCE

Statement on President Obama's Climate Action Plan

We support President Obama's efforts to implement a national Climate Action Plan that is comprehensive, achievable, and promotes a socially and environmentally just future for everyone. Communities on the frontlines of the impacts of climate change are all too aware of the urgency President Obama articulated in framing the Climate Action Plan. These communities are experienced and intimately knowledgeable about the causes of climate change because these causes have long been the source of community and environmental degradation. For this reason, we are also deeply concerned about some of the proposals set forth. On the one hand, the Plan identifies energy efficiency and renewable energy as solutions for the future, yet it also announces the scaling up destructive energy sources, including substantial federal investment in "advanced fossil fuel technology" (a euphemism for coal), natural gas infrastructure, that includes hydraulic fracturing, agrofuels, and nuclear power - all in the name of "clean energy." At the same time that it calls upon EPA's regulatory authority, the Plan hinges on dangerous and ineffective practices, such as carbon markets and offsets, as an implementation strategy. While hinting at a possible rejection of a permit for the Keystone XL pipeline, the Plan leaves the door open for the President to approve the pipeline based on the State Department's deeply flawed Environmental Impact Statement for the project. And at the same time that it acknowledges the need to adapt to the various types of climate impacts that are already upon us, the Plan stops short of supporting the kind of community-based solutions that can develop true resilience. We are concerned that the Plan continues a deep reliance and commitment to corporate welfare and subjugation of the environment and communities to the demands of profit, free trade, and the commodification of nature.

There is a better way. Communities around the US have experienced some of the first and worst impacts of climate change. Indigenous nations and their communities experiencing violations of their treaty and indigenous rights and further facing degradation of their territories and waterways, communities of color deeply affected by cumulative pollution and toxic sources, low-income urban and rural communities, including Alaska Natives, impacted by extraction and extreme energy, coastal communities affected by increased frequency and severity of storms, small-scale farmers and communities throughout the southwest, west and northern plains who have experienced the devastation of droughts and floods - have all come together as part of the Climate Justice Alliance (CJA) to promote a plan for a Just Transition. Our plan centers on two main strategies:

1. Transition away from the Extreme Energy Economy - the model of growth and corporate profit from energy sources that cause harm to people and the planet, including oil, tar sands, natural gas and fracking, coal, incineration, nuclear energy and proposed uranium mining for nuclear fuel, agrofuels and industrial agriculture, and megadams; and

2. Transition toward real solutions that are healthy for people and the planet – our Mother Earth, including community-controlled wind and solar power, public transit, ecosystem restoration, and preserving community and indigenous rights to land, water, seeds, and food sovereignty.

In addition to bringing about short and long-term benefits for the health of people and Mother Earth, implementation of these strategies will lead to significant financial benefits through the creation of millions of well-paying climate-related jobs, and through the strengthening of sustainable local, tribal and cooperative economies

There are communities across the country and around the world that are already working to implement these visions at the local level, and these can serve as models for the work taking place at the state and national levels as well. For example, in Black Mesa, Arizona, Navajo (Diné) indigenous communities already have a business plan through which the Navajo Generating Station can transition from its current state as a coal-fired power plant - not to natural gas - but to community-controlled solar power, thereby creating good climate jobs, truly clean energy, and economic benefits for the Navajo Nation to invest in other projects to strengthen its local economy and further build community resilience, including strengthening its traditional wool economy and community farms.

As the federal government is a majority owner in the Navajo Generating station, one clear step that President Obama can take is to direct his administration to support the efforts of the Black Mesa Water Coalition in reaching these goals. Likewise, we call on President Obama to use his Presidential authority to reject the last phase of the proposed northern plains segment of the TransCanada Keystone XL tar sands pipeline, as well as the proposed expansion of the Enbridge Line 67 tar sands pipeline. We call upon President Obama to stop construction of the 485-mile southern segment of the Keystone XL, that if completed will be carrying climate killing tar sands oil to refineries and ports in Texas and the Gulf Coast. These pipelines are not in the national interests of the United States.

We believe that we can come together to achieve a real and just Climate Action Plan. We have the experience and the expertise. We have ideas and we have a deep commitment. We can be a vital part of creating an innovative, socially responsible, and just Plan. We respectfully ask President Obama to listen to the voices of the communities at the frontlines of the climate crisis in the US and internationally, and adopt solutions that can lead us to a truly Just Transition.

For a full list of member organizations of the Climate Justice Alliance, visit www.ourpowercampaign.org.