



September 15, 2015

Dear President Obama,

Climate change poses unprecedented threats to human civilization. During your term you've given voice to the urgency of those threats and have taken important steps to address greenhouse gas pollution. But these efforts, and the efforts of other leaders in the United States and abroad, haven't been enough to prevent greenhouse gas emissions from reaching record levels and accelerating the world toward climate catastrophe. International initiatives to tackle carbon emissions are undermined by the continued expansion of fossil fuel development across the globe. Here at home, the longstanding U.S. policy of leasing federal public lands and oceans to corporations for coal, oil and gas extraction must end. As the world focuses on climate change in advance of negotiations in Paris this winter, we urge you to demonstrate strong climate leadership by stopping new leasing of our publicly owned fossil fuels.

Federal leasing of publicly owned fossil fuels contributes significantly to U.S. and global greenhouse gas emissions. Over the past decade, the burning of fossil fuels from federal leasing has resulted in nearly a quarter of all U.S. energy-related emissions and nearly 4 percent of global emissions. Despite this pollution and the looming climate threat, your administration continues to lease publicly owned fossil fuels, endangering the health and welfare of communities and the planet.

Under existing federal laws, including the Mineral Leasing Act, Outer Continental Shelf Lands Act, Federal Land Policy and Management Act, and Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act, you have clear authority to stop new leases. With the stroke of a pen, you could take the bold action needed to **stop new federal leasing of fossil fuels, and to keep those remaining fossil fuels — our *publicly owned* fossil fuels — safely in the ground.**

The cost of continuing federal fossil fuel leasing to our land, climate and communities is too high. The science is clear that, to maintain a good chance of avoiding catastrophic levels of warming, the world must keep the vast majority of its remaining fossil fuels in the ground. Federal fossil fuels — those that you control — are the natural place to begin. Each new federal fossil fuel lease opens new deposits for development that should be deemed unburnable. By placing those deposits off limits, stopping new leasing would help align your administration's energy policy with a safer climate future and global carbon budgets. With so many of our federal public lands and waters already leased, it is time to stop selling even more of these public fossil fuels to be extracted and burned.

Up to 450 billion tons of potential greenhouse gas pollution could be immediately removed from the global pool of potential climate pollution by stopping new federal leasing. To address the climate crisis, our national energy policy must curb fossil fuel demand *and production*. As the



world's largest historic cumulative polluter and a global economic leader, the imperative for U.S. climate leadership is paramount. As the climate negotiations in Paris approach, **a U.S. commitment to stop new fossil fuel leasing would set an important precedent in the global fight to keep fossil fuels in the ground.**

Federal public lands and waters — such as our national parks, monuments, forests, wildlife refuges and oceans — are cherished resources for us all. They embody deep and diverse cultural values and provide clean air and water, recreation and solitude, and refuge for endangered wildlife. Yet your administration alone has leased nearly 15 million acres of public land and 21 million acres of ocean for fossil fuel industrialization. In total more than 67 million acres — *an area 55 times larger than Grand Canyon National Park* — is already leased to the fossil fuel industry.

Stopping new leasing would help secure the legacy of our public lands. It would safeguard our air and water from dirty energy pollution; ensure the health of communities that have lived in energy sacrifice zones for generations; and keep our last, best wildlife habitat from being lost to fossil fuel industrialization. By stopping new leasing, you would begin to resolve some of our nation's most contentious fossil fuel conflicts, including:

- Powder River Basin coal mining and oil and gas drilling;
- Arctic oil and gas drilling and fracking;
- Gulf of Mexico offshore drilling and fracking;
- National forest and grassland fracking and coal mining;
- Atlantic seaboard detonations for seismic exploration;
- California onshore and offshore fracking;
- Colorado River Basin oil shale and tar sands extraction;
- Four Corners-area fracking and coal mining pollution.

Stopping federal fossil fuel leasing also makes economic sense. According to the federal government's own estimates, the burning of our publicly owned fossil fuels costs society between \$16 billion and \$155 billion in climate-related damages per year. As you've noted, the unparalleled potential for clean energy jobs in the renewable energy and efficiency sectors are *the path to a just transition for a clean energy future.*

For these reasons we, the undersigned, call on you to use your existing executive authority to stop new leasing of our remaining, publicly owned fossil fuels. We call on you to make our nation the first to commit to keeping all of its remaining, unleased public fossil fuels in the ground, thereby challenging other nations to do the same. Such leadership is necessary to ensure a livable climate and planet for both present and future generations.

Sincerely,



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