

Celebrities and activists launch a People's Petition for Clean Air Act

By Jean Williams
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The Center for Biological Diversity today launched a campaign to gather 500,000 signatures on a People's Petition asking the Environmental Protection Agency to set a national pollution standard to reduce carbon dioxide pollution in the atmosphere to 350 parts per million. Atmospheric CO2 is currently at 390 parts per million and growing, causing a dangerous climate disruption.

The People's Petition is in support of a Clean Air Act legal filing submitted by the Center and 350.org in December 2009 to set an upper limit of 350 parts per million on dangerous greenhouse gas pollution. The EPA is currently reviewing the request and is expected to render a decision later this year.

Though Congress and the White House have been crafting legislation, and the EPA is beginning the process of regulation, there is as yet no formal scientific standard determining what the safe level of carbon dioxide is and how deeply emissions need to be reduced to return to the safety zone.

According to actor and environmental activist, Ed Begley, Jr.: "Setting climate policy without

a scientific target is like driving with your eyes closed. You don't know where you're going and you'll probably crash. The EPA should open everyone's eyes as soon as possible by determining the safe level of greenhouse gases."

Begley is joined as an initial signer of the petition by Dr. Jim Hansen of NASA, who said: "Science demands that we reduce atmospheric carbon pollution to a level of 350 parts per million (ppm) or less to sustain life as we know it. Energy and climate policies must recognize this 350 ppm limit."

The grassroots campaign is also supported by musician and activist Bonnie Raitt, who said: "In 40 years of performing and working for social change, I've learned that the best, longest-lasting policy reforms come from the ground up. I hope that 500,000 people join me in asking the EPA to bring atmospheric carbon dioxide pollution back down to 350 parts per million. The lives of polar bears, sea turtles, and the human race depend on it."

Bestselling author Barbara Kingsolver explained the ethical and personal imperative of establishing a clear, specific target for greenhouse gas pollution reduction: "Reaching 350 ppm is a matter of living by my values — which include both 'love your neighbor' and 'try not to wreck



*Smoke stacks
Alfred Palmer*

every blooming thing on the planet while you're here."

Among the many notables joining these initial signers of the People's Petition are activists Michael Dorsey (Sierra Club board member), Brock Evans (president of the Endangered Species Coalition), Dr. Helen Caldicott (anti-nuclear activist), former government official Curtis Moore (Republican counsel to the Senate's Committee on Environment and Public Works), scientists Dr. Thomas Lovejoy (biodiversity chair, Heinz Center), Dr. Niles Eldredge (American Museum of Natural History) and Dr. John Terborgh (Center for Tropical Conservation, Duke University), and authors Lemony Snicket (i.e. Daniel Handler), Jonathan Lethem (author of *Motherless Brooklyn*), Rick Moody (author of *The Ice Storm*) and Donna Tartt (author of *The Secret History*).