Before the President of the United States

Petition for the Declaration of a National Emergency Addressing Climate Change and The Consequent Prohibition of United States Crude Oil

April 20, 2016
“For I believe in the words of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., that there is such a thing as being too late. And when it comes to climate change, that hour is almost upon us.”
– President Barack Obama, inaugural address at COP21

“Ultimately, if we’re going to prevent large parts of this Earth from becoming not only inhospitable but uninhabitable in our lifetimes, we’re going to have to keep some fossil fuels in the ground rather than burn them and release more dangerous pollution into the sky.”
– President Barack Obama, statement on rejection of the Keystone XL Pipeline

“Having the oil export ban lifted permanently, it’s like having 100 Keystone pipelines.”
– Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives Paul Ryan

Dear President Obama,

On behalf of our 350 environmental, social justice, indigenous, and health organizations, who collectively represent millions of Americans, we formally petition you to exercise your authorities under the 2016 Consolidated Appropriations Act (“Appropriations Act”) and the National Emergencies Act (“NEA”) to declare a national emergency to address climate change and, pursuant to such a declaration, prohibit the export of U.S. crude oil.

This emergency declaration is critical to safeguarding our climate and nation from the dangerous expansion of domestic oil development projected to result from the 2015 repeal of the crude oil export ban under the Appropriations Act. Lifting the crude ban has taken our country in exactly the wrong direction at a time when we must urgently transition to the low-carbon future you have publicly embraced.

Prohibiting crude exports is an essential component of efforts to limit global warming to no more than 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels—the crucial goal of the Paris Agreement adopted at the 2015 United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change Conference of the Parties.

5 50 U.S.C. 1601 et seq.
6 The Paris Agreement commits all signatories to an articulated target to hold the long-term global average temperature “to well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels and to pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels.” United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, Conference of the Parties to the President of the United States

NATIONAL CLIMATE EMERGENCY DECLARATION TO PROHIBIT CRUDE OIL EXPORTS
The export ban’s repeal is projected to increase U.S. crude oil production by at least 500,000 barrels per day, and perhaps as much as 3.3 million barrels per day. Combusting such large amounts of oil could release up to 500 million tons of carbon dioxide (CO₂) per year⁷ — the equivalent to the annual carbon emissions of 135 dirty coal-fired power plants or over 100 million cars.⁸

The damages from the oil exports surge will be felt not only by our global climate, but also by our own land, air, and communities. As the majority of new wells will be developed through unconventional, ultra-hazardous hydraulic fracturing, American communities will experience increased toxic air pollution, drinking water contamination, decimation of wildlife habitat, risk of explosions from “bomb trains” carrying crude oil cross-country, and surges in earthquakes like those caused by the oil industry in Oklahoma.⁹

Fortunately, these harms do not need to occur. The Appropriations Act grants you the explicit legal authority to prohibit crude oil exports in the case of a “national emergency.”¹⁰

Climate change is unquestionably a national emergency. As Dr. James Hansen and other leading scientists recently concluded, “[T]he message our climate science delivers to society, policymakers, and the public alike is this: we have a global emergency.”¹¹ The world faces increased droughts, floods, heat waves and other extreme weather events responsible for an estimated 400,000 deaths globally, as well as growing food insecurity, bleaching of coral reefs, and biodiversity losses.¹² The climate emergency is experienced similarly at home, with coastal communities and the country’s most vulnerable populations—the poor, elderly, sick and children—bearing the brunt of public health effects and property damage linked to climate change. As the Environmental Protection Agency (“EPA”) concluded in April 2009, “greenhouse gas air pollution endangers the public welfare of both current and future generations. The risk and the severity of adverse impacts on public welfare are expected to

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⁸ Id.
⁹ Id.
¹¹ James Hansen et al., *Ice melt, sea level rise and superstorms: evidence from paleoclimate data, climate modeling, and modern observations that 2 °C global warming could be dangerous*, ATMOSPHERIC CHEMISTRY AND PHYSICS, 16, 3761-3812 (2016).
In the seven years since the EPA’s endangerment finding, climate impacts have only gotten worse, justifying the urgent call for a national climate emergency.

For the world to stay within a carbon budget consistent with a 1.5°C temperature limit—so as to avoid truly catastrophic climate impacts—we must leave significant fossil fuels in the ground. Put simply, only a limited amount of greenhouse gases can be released into the atmosphere without rendering the goal of meeting the 1.5°C (or even a 2°C) target virtually impossible. In recent months you have clearly acknowledged that curtailing fossil fuels extraction is critical to the fight against global warming. Using the clear authorities you possess as President, you have taken important steps down this path by rejecting the Keystone XL Pipeline, imposing the recent moratorium on coal leasing on federal lands, and canceling or delaying multiple federal fossil fuel lease sales. The repeal of the 40-year-old crude oil export ban contrasts starkly with those wise decisions.

By signing the Appropriations Act and lifting the export ban, you risk undermining the commitments you made in Paris and tarnishing your legacy as a climate leader. However, the same Appropriations Act that repealed the export ban also contains the authority you need to reinstate the ban, via a declaration of a national emergency. All that is required is that you act upon this authority.

In light of the above, and as further elaborated in the legal and scientific addendum to this petition, the undersigned organizations respectfully request that you, pursuant to Sections 101(c) and 101(d)(1)(A) of Division O, Title I of the Appropriations Act, and consistent with the provisions of the NEA, declare a national emergency with respect to climate change and the impacts of crude oil exports, formally notice the declaration of such a national emergency in the Federal Register, and, accordingly, prohibit the export of U.S. crude oil.

Sincerely,

[Signatories to follow on next page.]

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14 A target of 1.5°C, while obviously more protective of the climate than a 2°C target, may itself be too high to avoid catastrophic consequences. Dr. James Hansen and colleagues have recommended limiting warming to 1°C to “stabilize climate and avoid potentially disastrous impacts on today’s young people, future generations, and nature.” See James Hanson et. al, Assessing “dangerous climate change”: required reduction of carbon emissions to protect young people, future generations and nature, 8 PLoS ONE 8, e81648 (2013).
15 THE WHITE HOUSE, supra note 2.
NATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

Nancy Price  
Alliance for Democracy (U.S.)  

Leila Salazar-Lopez  
Amazon Watch  

Ted Glick  
Beyond Extreme Energy  

Karuna Jaggar  
Breast Cancer Action  

Jean Su  
Center for Biological Diversity  

Sue Chiang  
Center for Environmental Health  

Sylvia Wu  
Center for Food Safety  

Lois Gibbs  
Center for Health, Environment & Justice  

Alyssa Johl  
Center for International Environmental Law  

Harriet Shugarman  
ClimateMama  

Denny Larson  
Community Science Institute  

Patti Lynn  
Corporate Accountability International  

Elijah Zarlin  
CREDO  

Valerie Heinonen, O.S.U.  
Dominican Sisters of Hope  

Nancy Price  
Earth Democracy Group  

Jennifer Krill  
Earthworks  

Dan Brook, Ph.D.  
Eco-Eating  

Daniela Gioseffi  
Eco-Poetry  

Paul Severance  
Elders Climate Action  

Lydia Avila  
Energy Action Coalition  

Margie Alt  
Environment America  

Drew Hudson  
Environmental Action  

Wenonah Hauter  
Food & Water Watch  

Randy Hayes  
Foundation Earth  

Ben Schreiber  
Friends of the Earth U.S.  

Susan Silverman  
GARDEN, Inc.  

Shelley Silbert  
Great Old Broads for Wilderness  

Bradley Angel  Greenaction for Health and Environmental Justice  

Kyle Ash  
Greenpeace USA  

Mark C. Johnson  
Interfaith Moral Action on Climate  

PETITION TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES  
NATIONAL CLIMATE EMERGENCY DECLARATION TO PROHIBIT CRUDE OIL EXPORTS
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Joe Uehlein
Labor Network for Sustainability

David Swanson
RootsAction.org

Lupe Anguiano
League of United Latin American Citizens

Dan Becker
Safe Climate Campaign

Catherine Tactaquin
National Network for Immigrant and Refugee Rights

Shale Test

Judy Byron
Northwest Coalition for Responsible Investment

Marianne Comfort
Sisters of Mercy of the Americas, Institute Justice Team

Timothy Judson
Nuclear Information and Resource Service

Anna Lappe
Small Planet Institute

Michael Stocker
Ocean Conservation Research

Matt Krogh
Stand

Alexis Baden-Mayer
Organic Consumers Association

Robby Diesu
Stop the Frack Attack

John Sellers
Other98

Chris Tittle
Sustainable Economies Law Center

Andrea Miller
People Demanding Action

Daphne Wysham
Sustainable Energy & Economy Network

Catherine Thomasson, M.D.
Physicians for Social Responsibility

Adam Hasz
SustainUS

Donna Smith
Progressive Democrats of America

Anuradha Mittal
The Oakland Institute

Allison Fisher
Public Citizen

Stiv Wilson
The Story of Stuff Project

Zoe Ackerman
Rachel Carson Council

Todd Steiner
Turtle Island Restoration Network

Ruth Breech
Rainforest Action Network

Lesley Adams
Waterkeeper Alliance

Rising Tide North America

Regina Asmutis-Silvia
Whale and Dolphin Conservation
PETITION TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES
NATIONAL CLIMATE EMERGENCY DECLARATION TO PROHIBIT CRUDE OIL EXPORTS

Tim Ream
WildEarth Guardians
Sarah Lachance
350 Maine

Jack Eidt
WilderUtopia
Richard Gray
350 Marin

Patricia Gonzales
William C. Velasquez Institute
Daniel Helmer
350 Plattsburgh

Osprey-Orielle Lake
Women’s Earth and Climate Action Network
Megan Elsea
350 Sacramento

Mary Hanson Harrison
Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom
Pauline Seales
350 Santa Cruz

REGIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

Tracy Carluccio
Delaware Riverkeeper Network
Molly Ornati
350 Brooklyn

Tabitha Tripp
Heartwood
Meryl Greer Domina
350Kishwaukee

Otto Butz
Milford Doers
Rosemary Carey
350NJ
Residents of Crumhorn Mountain

Michael Kellett
RESTORE: The North Woods
Deirdre Aherne
350NYC

Betsy Nicholas
Waterkeepers Chesapeake
Sarah Kellogg
ACT Against Coal Ash

STATE & LOCAL ORGANIZATIONS

Richard Gray
350 Bay Area
Tara Sumner
Advocates for Springfield

Maria Bergheim
350 Loudoun
Delice Calcote
Alaska Inter-Tribal Council

Renate Heurich
350 Louisiana
Sarah B. Stewart
Animals Are Sentient Beings, Inc.
Michaelann Bewsee  
_Arise for Social Justice_  

Jean Arnold & Michael Mielke  
_Association for the Tree of Life_  

Heather Cantino  
_Athens County Fracking Action Network_  

Charmian Larke  
_Atlantic Energy_  

John Deegan, O.S.A.  
_Augustinians_  

Sally Rings  
_AZ Interfaith Power & Light_  

Tana Hartman Thorn  
_Balance & Accuracy in Journalism_  

Jim Lamm  
_Ballona Creek Renaissance_  

Marily Woodhouse  
_Battle Creek Alliance_  

Amanda Means  
_Beacon Climate Action_  

Karen Feridun  
_Berks Gas Truth_  

Jane Kleeb  
_Bold Alliance, Bold Nebraska_  

Ed Fallon  
_Bold Iowa_  

Rebecca Roter  
_Breathe Easy Susquehanna County_  

Jennifer Scarlott  
_Bronx Climate Justice North_  

Greg Suba  
_California Native Plant Society_  

Michael J. Painter  
_Californians for Western Wilderness_  

Lisa Crvaric  
_CAPP_  

Jane Cowgill  
_Citizens Against (silica) Sand Mining_  

Wes Gillingham  
_Catskill Mountainkeeper_  

Tom Swan  
_CT Citizen Action Group_  

David Kyler  
_Center for a Sustainable Coast_  

Karenna Gore  
_Center for Earth Ethics_  

Madeline Stano  
_Center on Race, Poverty & the Environment_  

Gustavo Aguirre, Jr.  
_Central California Environmental Justice Network_  

Sid Madison  
_Central Jersey Coalition Against Endless War_  

Helen Conly, John Brooks  
_Citizens for Responsible Oil & Gas_  

Martha Girolami  
_Chatham Research Group_  

Jim Gurley  
_Citizens Acting for Rail Safety_  

Tex Hawkins  
_Citizens Against Silica Mining_
Paul V. Ferrazzi
Citizens Coalition for a Safe Community

Elizabeth Hudetz
Citizens for a Healthy Fort Collins

Jennifer Metzger
Citizens for Local Power

Georgina Shanley
Citizens United for Renewable Energy

Russell Zerbo
Clean Air Council

Gabriel Fair
Clemson University Students for Environmental Action

Joni Grady
Climate Action Alliance of the Valley

Gabriel Shapiro
Climate Action Now

Victoria Furio
Climate Justice @ Union Theological Seminary

Derek Hoshiko
Climate Solutions

Sue Rosenberg
Coalition Against Pilgrim Pipelines (NY)

Dave Ewoldt
Coalitions of Mutual Endeavor

Sara Kent
Coastal Environmental Rights Foundation

Kathy Maher
Coastal Monmouth Democratic Club

Greg Pace
Columbus Community Bill of Rights

Emily Herbert
Community for Earth First UU Church Portland

Donald Hebbard
Compressor Free Franklin

Eric Banford
Concerned Citizens of Danby

Daniel Taylor
Concerned Residents of Oxford

Michael Marx
Corporate Ethics International

Eddie Kurtz
Courage Campaign

Heidi S. Gogins
Delaware Action Group

Stephen Brittle
Don’t Waste Arizona

Anne Burt
Down to Earth Climate Justice Stories

Marie McRae
Dryden Resource Awareness Coalition

Kathleen Rogers
Earth Day Network

Mary Gutierrez
Earth Ethics, Inc.

Sharon Delgado
Earth Justice Ministries

Tom Athanasiou
EcoEquity

Fredric Evenson
Ecological Rights Foundation
Cara L. Campbell  
*Ecology Party of Florida*

Dan Silver  
*Endangered Habitats League*

Laura Dorle  
*Environment Maine*

Peter M. Iwanowicz  
*Environmental Advocates of New York*

Amy Datz  
*Environmental Caucus of Florida*

Dania Flores-Heagney  
*Environmental Justice League of Rhode Island*

Wanda Guthrie  
*Environmental Justice TMC*

Natalynne DeLapp  
*Environmental Protection Information Center*

Graciela Sanchez  
*Esperanza Peace and Justice Center*

Ron & Maria De Stefano  
*Essex/Passaic County Green Party*

Judi Poulson  
*Fairmont, MN Peace Group*

Rosemarie Grubba  
*Florida Against Fracking*

Linda Young  
*Florida Clean Water Network*

Yulissa Arce  
*Florida Institute for Reform and Empowerment*

Gale Dickert  
*Floridians for a Ban on Fracking*

Liz Kirkwood  
*FLOW (For Love of Water)*

Jamie Johannsen  
*Forest City 350*

Patricia Popple  
*Concerned Chippewa Citizens*

Marc W. McCord  
*FracDallas*

Neshama Abraham  
*Frack Free Boulder*

Razz Gormley  
*Frack Free Colorado*

Shane Davis  
*Fractivist.org*

Christian Gerlach  
*Franciscan Action Network*

Jackie Schramm  
*Franciscan Response to Fracking*

Lea Harper  
*FreshWater Accountability Project*

Ron Martin  
*Fresnans Against Fracking*

Ed Friedman  
*Friends of Merrymeeting Bay*

Briget Shields  
*Friends of the Harmed*

Celia Scott  
*Friends of the Pogonip*
Marnie Gaede  
*Fund for Wild Nature*

Yvonne Taylor  
*Gas Free Seneca*

Lisa Max  
*GoSolarMarin*

Rev. Allen W. Gildard  
*Grace Community Church*

Gloria Rivera I.H.M.  
*Great Lakes Bioneers Detroit*

Jane Califf  
*Green Party of Essex and Passaic Counties, New Jersey*

Jody Grage  
*Green Party of Washington State*

Dale Agan  
*Ground Zero*

Cynthia Sarthou  
*Gulf Restoration Network*

Dede Shelton  
*Hands Across the Sand*

Eric Uram  
*Headwater*

G. Wayne Hild  
*Hild Foundation For Sustainability*

Lee Tinker Loe  
*Houston Peace News*

Paul Gallay  
*Hudson Riverkeeper*

Alma Hasse  
*I.C.A.R.E.*

Danielle Diamond  
*Illinois Citizens for Clean Air & Water*

Dawn Dannenbring  
*Illinois People’s Action*

Marty Landa  
*Inspiration of Sedona*

Adam Mason  
*Iowa Citizens for Community Improvement*

Holly Hart  
*Iowa Green Party*

Charles Weaver  
*Jackpine Savage Guide Service*

Chad Hanson  
*John Muir Project of Earth Island Institute*

Russell Greene  
*Justice Action Mobilization Network*

Ann Vileisis  
*Kalmiopsis Audubon Society*

Grace Kretschmann  
*L’Arche*

Jim Ewing  
*League of Women Voters Palm Beach*

Terry LaPlante  
*League of Women Voters Space Coast*

Fran Ludwig  
*Lexington Global Warming Action Coalition*

John Weisheit  
*Living Rivers and Colorado Riverkeeper*

Paul Gallimore  
*Long Branch Environmental Education Center*
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Organization/Group</th>
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<td>Chuenchom Lopez</td>
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<td>Greg Mello</td>
<td>Los Alamos Study Group</td>
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<td>Jeff Kuyper</td>
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<td>Cari Gardner</td>
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<td>Rev. Margaret Bullitt-Jonas</td>
<td>Massachusetts Interfaith Coalition for Climate Action</td>
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<td>Peggy Case</td>
<td>Michigan Citizens for Water Conservation</td>
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<td>Kelly Branigan</td>
<td>Middlefield Neighbors</td>
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<td>Kimberlee Wright</td>
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<td>Jesse P. Van Gerven</td>
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<td>Sue Stafford</td>
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<td>DeeVon Quirolo</td>
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<td>Jim Warren</td>
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<td>Amanda Nesheiwat</td>
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<td>Matt Shapiro</td>
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<td>No Fracked Gas in Mass</td>
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<td>Shirley Keech</td>
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<td>Jerry Rivers</td>
<td>North American Climate, Conservation and Environment</td>
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<td>Diane Wexler</td>
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<td>David A. Kraft</td>
<td>Nuclear Energy Information Service</td>
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<td>Edie Kantrowitz</td>
<td>NYC Friends of Clearwater</td>
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<td>Diane McAvoy</td>
<td>Occupy the Pipeline</td>
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<td>Rob Moir, Ph.D.</td>
<td>Ocean River Institute</td>
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<td>Dianne Bady</td>
<td>Ohio Valley Environmental Coalition</td>
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<td>Jana Gastellum</td>
<td>Oregon Environmental Council</td>
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PETITION TO THE RESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES
NATIONAL CLIMATE EMERGENCY DECLARATION TO PROHIBIT CRUDE OIL EXPORTS

Peter M. Lacy  
*Oregon Natural Desert Association*

Jim Geraghty  
*Political Waste Management*

Kaye Fissinger  
*Our Health, Our Future, Our Longmont*

Kathleen Bierne, P.D.V.M.  
*Presentation Sisters, Aberdeen, SD*

JoAnn Mark  
*Partnership for Global Justice*

Van Collinsworth  
*Preserve Wild Santee*

Craig Stevens  
*Patriots From The Oil & Gas Shales*

Camilla Fox  
*Project Coyote*

Nancy O’Byrne  
*Pax Christi Florida*

Luana Conley  
*Protect Monterey County*

Patricia Hill  
*PC PRIDE*

Gordian Raccke  
*Renewable Energy Long Island*

Norma J. F. Harrison  
*Peace and Freedom Party*

Kim Ross  
*ReThink Energy Florida*

Debbie Mytels  
*Peninsula Interfaith Climate Action*

Cori Redstone  
*Rising Tide Southern California*

Elizabeth D. Loser  
*Penn Central Conference United Church of Christ Green Justice, Ministry Team*

Toby Stover  
*Rochester Defense Against Fracking*

Barbara H. Warren, M.D., M.P.H.  
*People Demanding Action, Tucson Chapter*

Jessica Wohlander  
*Rootskeeper*

Diana L. Wright  
*People of Albany United for Safe Energy*

Mary Kushner  
*Roseland Against Compressor Station*

Tina Lieberman-Cohen  
*People’s Climate Movement-Capital Region*

Linda Seeley  
*San Luis Obispo Mothers for Peace*

Barbara H Warren, M.D., M.P.H.  
*Physicians for Social Responsibility, AZ Chapter*

Nicola Moelter  
*SanDiego350*

Gavin Raders  
*Planting Justice*

Mary M. Hamilton  
*SandyHook SeaLife Foundation*

Peter Hudiburg  
*Plymouth Friends of Clean Water*

Grace Feldmann  
*Santa Barbara Frack Back to Save the Central Coast*
Pauline Seales  
*Santa Cruz Climate Action Network*

Christian Gerlach  
*Save Nevada’s Water: Ban Fracking In Nevada*

Lori Andresen  
*Save Our Sky Blue Waters*

Cheryl Miller  
*Save The Hills Alliance*

Russell S. Donnelly  
*SECAP*

Tabitha Tripp  
*Shawnee Forest Sentinels*

Anny Martinez  
*Sierra Club New Jersey*

Patrick Bosold  
*Sierra Club, Leopold Group*

Karen Donahue  
*Sisters of Mercy West Midwest Justice Team*

Nora M. Nash  
*Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia*

Patricia Davis  
*Sisters of the Presentation, San Francisco, CA*

Jean’ne Blackwell  
*SLO Clean Water*

Heidi Harmon  
*SLO350*

Jack Eidt  
*SoCal 350 Climate Action*

David W. Kunhardt  
*SolEd Benefit Corp*

Joe Galliani  
*South Bay Los Angeles 350 Climate Action Group*

Michael Gorr  
*Southern Cayuga Anti-Fracking Alliance*

Tabitha Tripp  
*Southern Illinoisans Against Fracturing Our Environment*

Alan Journet Ph.D.  
*Southern Oregon Climate Action Now*

Maureen Headington  
*Stand Up/Save Lives Campaign*

Elliot Gonzales  
*Stop Fracking Long Beach*

Richard Lenihan  
*Stoppligrimpipeline.com*

Karen Martin  
*Straits Area Concerned Citizens for Peace, Justice and Environment*

Gabriel Shapiro  
*Sugar Shack Alliance*

Shoshana Wechsler  
*Sunflower Alliance*

Kiki La Porta  
*Sustainable Marin*

Katharine Jones  
*Sustainable Medina County*

William Carney  
*Sustainable San Rafael*

Gay Nicholson, Ph.D.  
*Sustainable Tompkins*
Petition to the President of the United States
National Climate Emergency Declaration to Prohibit Crude Oil Exports

- Jack Eidt, Tar Sands Action Southern California
- Carolee Kreiger, The California Water Impact Network
- Avram Friedman, The Canary Coalition
- Don Ogden, The Enviro Show
- Melanie Winter, The River Project
- Dan York, The Wildlands Conservancy
- James G. Kimball, Time Laboratory
- Katherine King, Tri-County Watchdogs
- Kathy Slaughter, Uncompahgre Group, Rocky Mountain Chapter, Sierra Club
- Reena Kondo, Unitarian Universalist Women’s Association
- Marcia Veldman, Unitarian Universalist Church of Bloomington
- Natalie Pien, Unitarian Universalist Church of Loudoun Green Team
- Anita Mentzer, Unitarian Universalist Pennsylvania Legislative Advocacy Network
- Edie Kantrowitz, United for Action
- Valerie Heinonen, O.S.U., Ursuline Sisters of Tildonk, U.S. Province
- Doug Cohen, US Partnership Education for Sustainability Development
- Susan Soleil, Utah Interfaith Power & Light
- Kathy Van Dame, Wasatch Clean Air Coalition
- William Henne, WATCH
- Suzanne Golas, C.S.J.P., WATERSPIRIT
- Doug Couchon, We Are Seneca Lake
- Paula Kline, Westtown Peace and Social Concerns (Quakers)
- Helgaleena Healingline, White Rabbit Grove RDNA
- Brent Plater, Wild Equity Institute
- Monica Bond, Wild Nature Institute
- Zachary Plopper, WILDCOAST
- J’Ulene M. LaQue, Your-True-Colors Inc.

International Organizations

- Ursula Nussbaum, Asamblea contra la fractura Hidráulica en Merindades y Norte de Burgos
Nila Heredia Miranda  
*Asociación Latinoamericana de Medicina Social-Bolivia*

Alberto Martinez  
*ATTAC Spain*

Soumya Dutta  
*Beyond Copenhagen Collective*

Andy Gheorghiu  
*BI lebenswertes Korbach e.V.*

Rachel Smolker  
*Biofuelwatch*

Jane Wood  
*Burnley and District Friends of the Earth*

Collectif Causse Méjean - Gaz de schiste NON!  

Herail Bruno  
*Collectif viganais contre le pétrole et gaz de schiste et de couche*

Samuel Martín-Sosa  
*Ecologistas en Acción*

M Concepcion Hernani  
*Ecologistas en Acción - La Rioja*

Ecologistas en Acción Palencia  

Ian Roberts  
*Frack Free Lancashire*

Martin Illingworth  
*Frack Free Skelmersdale/Lancashire*

Rainer Rohwer  
*Fracking Verhindern*

Ignacio Colorado Carrasco  
*Ganemos Arganzuela*

Ewa Sufin-Jacquemart  
*Fundacja Strefa Zieleni*

Ayodele Akele  
*Labour, Health and Human Rights Development Centre*

El Hassen Abdellahi Semane  
*ONG Arbre*

Juan Carlos Gracia  
*Plataforma Ciudadana Zaragoza sin Fractura*

Pablo A. de la Vega M.  
*Plataforma Interamericana de Derechos Humanos, Democracia y Desarrollo*

Ioana Flroea  
*Quantic Association*

Frances Sinclair  
*Radical Independence Campaign East Kilbride*

Anne Fielding  
*RAFF*

Jasber Singh  
*Renewable Energy Alliance Lancashire*

Samuel Arnold  
*Sustainable Energy Group - Carleton Chapter*

David Wimberly  
*Transition Bay St. Margarets*

Ana Carla  
*Cabrita da Conceição Walkin’ Sagres*

[End of signatories.]