

# CONFRONTING THE CLIMATE CRISIS

The Olympia FOR's "Confronting the Climate Crisis" project is moving vigorously ahead in many ways! We mobilized people to oppose coal trains and coal exports, we organized a climate rally on the State Capitol steps, we are devising some legislative solutions, and we are planning other actions. See the exciting information below in this article's **RECENT ACCOMPLISHMENTS** section. Also look for more information and ways to help in the **Exciting New Possibilities** section.

**ONGOING MEETINGS AND ORGANIZING:** The Olympia FOR's climate group ("Confronting the Climate Crisis") met twice each month during November, December and January, and we'll meet once a month starting on **Tuesday February 19**. Each meeting has attracted about 20 enthusiastic participants. We meet at the Olympia Center, 222 Columbia Street NW, downtown, from 6:30 to 8:30 pm. Our January 22 meeting featured Seth Ballhorn, who spoke knowledgeably about the Sierra Club's effort to pressure the electric utility Puget Sound Energy to stop burning coal. **Join us for our next regular meeting at 6:30 pm Tuesday February 19 at the Olympia Center, 222 Columbia St. NW, downtown.**

**OUR SMALL "WORKING GROUPS" ARE ACTIVE!** In addition, our five small "working groups" are meeting between these general meetings in various members' homes to continue organizing further activities. These groups are:

- Coal Trains: [We need a volunteer for this role.]
- Direct Action: Rod Tharp, (360) 786-1901 [smcrae@earthlink.net](mailto:smcrae@earthlink.net)
- Divesting from Fossil Fuel Companies: Ted Nation, (360) 352-6327 [nation\\_ted@yahoo.com](mailto:nation_ted@yahoo.com)
- Outreach—Education—Communication: Glen Anderson, (360) 491-9093 [glen@olywa.net](mailto:glen@olywa.net)
- Positive Visions (alternatives, legislation, etc.): Gar Lipow, (360) 943-1529 [gar.lipow@gmail.com](mailto:gar.lipow@gmail.com)

## CLIMATE: RECENT ACCOMPLISHMENTS:



The Grim Reapers participated in the Olympia FOR's climate rally at the State Capitol on Monday January 14, 2013.

**COAL TRAINS AND COAL EXPORT:** The Olympia FOR's climate group and other local folks mobilized much action to oppose the proposal to send countless millions of tons of coal from mines in Montana and Wyoming in open rail cars through Spokane, down along the Columbia River, and up through our community to Whatcom County for export to Asia. We helped many people submit comments for the government to consider during the "Scoping Hearings" for the export proposal's Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), and we collaborated with the Thurston County Progressive Network (TC Pro-Net, [www. tcpronet.org](http://www.tcpronet.org)) to fill a bus with local people to help pack the Seattle Convention Center full of people opposing the coal export scheme on December 13.

A video of the previous hearing in Bellingham is at this link:

[http://tvw.org/index.php?option=com\\_tvwplayer&eventID=2012120028](http://tvw.org/index.php?option=com_tvwplayer&eventID=2012120028)

The Olympia FOR's Robert "Berd" Whitlock took photos at the December 13 Seattle event. See his photos at <http://flickr.com/gp/rwhitlock/159e9n/>

**MON. JAN. 14 CLIMATE RALLY AT THE CAPITOL:** The Olympia FOR's climate group organized an informative and inspiring rally on the steps of the Washington State Capitol Building on Monday January 14, the first day of the 2013 legislative session. More than 100 persons attended on a cold, windy day with occasional snow flurries. MCs Bourtai Hargrove and Glen Anderson kept the event moving along briskly. Many knowledgeable and articulate speakers addressed various aspects of the climate crisis and urged practical solutions. Seattle folksinger Jim Page performed. Effective visuals from the Backbone Campaign dramatized the issue. Rod Tharp provided additional visuals and arranged for dozens of people to spell out NO COAL and 350.ORG on the steps of the Supreme Court building (Temple of Justice) just north of the Capitol steps. Mike and Marylea Coday organized the overall planning and provided all the necessary equipment. Robert "Berd" Whitlock, Bob Zeigler and others took photos. See some of Berd's photos at <http://flickr.com/gp/rwhitlock/215yTt/>, including his photo of the "Grim Reapers" shown above. Also see his videos of some speakers at <http://youtu.be/4B0iz97rjkw>

**SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS AND "CHASING ICE" film:** We co-sponsored and/or helped to publicize several speaking engagements and other outreach activities, including publicizing and speaking briefly at the "Chasing Ice" film shown by the Olympia Film Society on Jan. 26.

# CLIMATE: EXCITING NEW POSSIBILITIES:

SEE THE NEWSLETTER CALENDAR FOR LOCAL ACTIONS FEBRUARY 16-19 IN SOLIDARITY WITH THE NATIONWIDE PROTEST AGAINST THE CLIMATE-DESTROYING KEYSTONE XL PIPELINE.

**URGE CONGRESS TO ADDRESS THE “CLIMATE CLIFF.”** While the so-called “fiscal cliff” was a contrived scam to pressure Congress to cut the social safety net, we really do face a climate crisis that some folks are calling the “Climate Cliff.” A new interactive website, [www.ClimateCliff.org](http://www.ClimateCliff.org), identifies the politicians who are ignoring the problem and appreciates the politicians who are speaking and acting responsibly. Visit the site and communicate with Congress and President Obama.

**100 DAYS OF ACTION TO STOP CLIMATE CHANGE:** The Sierra Club is promoting this new campaign from Inauguration Day in January to Earth Day in April. Connect with “100 Days of Action to Stop Climate Change” by visiting [www.standwiththeplanet.com](http://www.standwiththeplanet.com)

**THE U.S. GOVERNMENT HAS BEEN PREVENTING PROGRESS AT THE ANNUAL UNITED NATIONS CLIMATE CONFERENCES:** The U.S. government failed to ratify the Kyoto Protocol many years ago, and the U.S. has been preventing the United Nations’ annual climate conferences from achieving significant results since then – regardless of which big political party is in the White House. This report from Democracy Now! reports from the recent conference at Doha: [www.democracynow.org/2012/12/10/incredibly\\_disappointed\\_civil\\_groups\\_decry\\_weak](http://www.democracynow.org/2012/12/10/incredibly_disappointed_civil_groups_decry_weak)

**PRESIDENT OBAMA’S INAUGURAL SPEECH GAVE LOFTY RHETORIC ABOUT THE CLIMATE CRISIS. NOW MAKE HIM “WALK THE TALK.”** The environmental organization Greenpeace ([www.greenpeace.org/usa/en/](http://www.greenpeace.org/usa/en/)) says they believe Obama wants to “do the right thing and move this country forward” and that they would help in very specific ways to help him achieve the goals embedded in his rhetoric. **GREENPEACE URGES OBAMA TO IMPLEMENT THIS FIVE-PART PLAN:**

- 1. Put a final period on the end of “No Keystone Pipeline.”** We’re sick of hearing “for now” at the end of this statement. Not only does the pipeline put us at risk of an unthinkable spill, it’s not the answer to progress for America’s energy future.
- 2. Accelerate the expansion of clean, safe renewable energy.** The clean energy industry needs your support rather than massive oil companies, dirty coal utilities and natural gas. When the United States invests in clean energy technology, we’re investing in our future.
- 3. Make carbon unaffordable.** Why is it so cheap to quicken climate change and poison Americans? We need you to stand up to polluters, President Obama. They’re putting our health at risk, our homes at risk and our countries at risk. And you’re making it laughably easy to do so.

4. **Save the Arctic.** After months of campaigning to save the Arctic from oil companies looking to profit from record-low sea ice in our global air conditioner, we were thrilled to hear Shell's announcement that they would do no Arctic drilling in 2012. However, we know it's only a matter of time before Shell, or another company, gives it another go. We need President Obama to grant no permits to any company to drill for oil in Arctic.
5. **Support communities most impacted by climate change.** In 2012, Hurricane Sandy showed us how quickly a superstorm can wipe out everything your entire livelihood. Unfortunately, climate change events can come in the form of a destructive wildfire, a devastating drought or sudden powerful storms. President Obama has to plan for the reality of climate change and help those Americans that are always left to clean up the mess.

**OBAMA CAN TAKE SPECIFIC BOLD ACTIONS FOR ENERGY AND THE ENVIRONMENT ON HIS OWN AUTHORITY WITHOUT CONGRESS:** Many people assume that Congress prevents President Obama from addressing problems. **But actually the President has Executive Branch authority that he could exercise without Congressional approval.** Even before Obama first took office in 2009 the Center for American Progress ([www.americanprogress.org](http://www.americanprogress.org)) identified things that Obama could do. Four years later he still has not acted. The Center recommends ten things that President Obama could do now for energy and the environment – some on his own authority without waiting for Congress and some with his leadership calling for Congress to act. **See the box below.**

Top 10 Energy and Environment Priorities for the President's Second Term	Requires Congressional Action?
Reduce carbon pollution by 17 percent below 2005 levels by 2020.	No
Reduce "short-lived climate pollutants" by adding the phase out of hydrofluorocarbons, or HFCs, to the Montreal Protocol for ozone-layer protection.	No
Finalize a new international climate protection treaty.	No. Treaties require only Senate ratification
Raise designated revenue to help communities become more resilient to climate-change-related extreme weather events.	Yes
Issue a new and more protective ozone smog health standard.	No
Limit the production of dirty tar sands by rejecting the Keystone XL pipeline.	No
Reduce pollution and oil use from vehicles.	Some
Use federal lands and waters, where appropriate, to support clean energy development.	No
Establish federal policies that increase demand for clean electricity.	Clean Energy Standard: yes. Others: no
Reform the tax code to favor clean renewable energy and end Big Oil tax breaks.	Yes

**OBAMA HAS THE POWER TO STRENGTHEN AIR POLLUTION STANDARDS FOR EXISTING POWER PLANTS UNDER THE ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION ACT:** Recently President Obama's EPA adopted regulations strengthening air pollution standards for new power plants, and that is good. But the National Resources Defense Council (NRDC) is also urging him to use the EPA's authority to do this for existing power plants. We are not likely to get many new coal-burning plants in the U.S., but we have a

great many existing coal plants, and that's where a lot of air pollution is coming from. Obama could do this if he wanted to. See [www.nrdc.org/air/pollution-standards/](http://www.nrdc.org/air/pollution-standards/)

**SEATTLE'S MAYOR CALLS FOR THE CITY'S PENSION FUND TO DIVEST ITSELF FROM OIL STOCKS.** See this: [http://grist.org/news/seattle-mayor-calls-for-citys-pension-funds-to-dump-oil-stocks/?utm\\_campaign=socialflow&utm\\_source=twitter&utm\\_medium=tweet](http://grist.org/news/seattle-mayor-calls-for-citys-pension-funds-to-dump-oil-stocks/?utm_campaign=socialflow&utm_source=twitter&utm_medium=tweet)

The Olympia FOR's Divestment group is working on this approach for other jurisdictions and entities. Contact Ted Nation at (360) 352-6327 [nation\\_ted@yahoo.com](mailto:nation_ted@yahoo.com).

**A LOCAL CAMPAIGN IS URGING THE EVERGREEN STATE COLLEGE TO DIVEST FROM FOSSIL FUEL COMPANIES:**

Visit <http://act.350.org/sign/Fossil-Free-Evergreen/>

**THE PURSUIT OF PROSPERITY IS DOOMING HUMANITY TO "EXTREMELY DANGEROUS" CLIMATE CHANGE. DENIAL AND HARD POLITICAL DECISIONS ARE IMPORTANT REASONS WHY GOVERNMENTS ARE FAILING TO ACT — AND WHY ORDINARY PEOPLE FEEL POWERLESS:** Dangerous changes to the world's climate are underway. Current plans for mitigating the dangers "significantly underestimate what is necessary to avoid dangerous climate change," according to a 2011 report on climate scenarios published in the *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society*. Two British scientists said politicians are ignoring science "because of political considerations." In particular, political authorities are refusing to acknowledge that "avoiding dangerous (and even extremely dangerous) climate change is no longer compatible with economic prosperity."

The conclusion that no one in power (or seeking power) will admit publicly is this: "([E]xtremely) dangerous climate change can only be avoided if economic growth is exchanged, at least temporarily, for a period of planned austerity within Annex 1 nations and a rapid transition away from fossil-fuelled development within non-Annex 1 nations." Thanks to Tacoma's Mark Jensen for providing this information. See <http://ufppc.org/us-a-world-news-mainmenu-35/11345/> or <http://goo.gl/Kwp1Q>

This article's many technical details need not bog us down. The summary immediately above is sufficient for us to proceed with practical strategies to address the problems.

People working to protect the climate seem to understand the seriousness of the crisis --- and also seem to understand that "business-as-usual" and "politics-as-usual" are significant obstacles to solving the problem. **Too many people with economic and/or political power (A) are making money off the status quo; and (B) don't want to upset the powerful interests. As a result, the general public is allowed to either (C) remain in denial; or (D) feel powerless. Those of us who want to solve the climate crisis need to take**

**STRATEGICALLY SMART actions to directly address (A), (B), (C), and/or (D).** Each of these strategies would require different approaches. Any of these four would be a good first step. Perhaps some people will pick one to work on, and other people will pick others. Let's think individually about creative strategies that would engage other people and provide leverage toward moving in any of these directions. If you are interested in exploring strategically smart ways to move ahead on (A), (B), (C), or (D), contact Glen Anderson at (360) 491-9093 [glen@olympiafor.org](mailto:glen@olympiafor.org)

Also, the Olympia FOR's April 2013 TV program will focus on the psychological and spiritual consequences of such "denial" about the climate, nuclear weapons, and other hard realities that people avoid dealing with honestly.

**WATCH "COAL CROSSROADS," A ONE-HOUR VIDEO COMPREHENSIVE OVERVIEW OF COAL EXPORT PROPOSALS THAT WOULD DAMAGE OUR PACIFIC COAST.** Click "Coal Crossroads" at this link to watch it on TVW: [http://tvw.org/index.php?option=com\\_tvwsearch&keywords=coal+crossroad](http://tvw.org/index.php?option=com_tvwsearch&keywords=coal+crossroad)

**LOOK FOR MORE INFO AND RESOURCES ON THE CLIMATE CRISIS PAGE OF [www.olympiafor.org](http://www.olympiafor.org)**