

The president needs to hear it from you

It's time for a trip to D.C

BY THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE SANTA LUCIA CHAPTER OF THE SIERRA CLUB

President Obama's presidential legacy will rest on his leadership in solving the climate crisis that is now upon us. Late last year, the president offered to have a conversation with the American people about climate. In his second inaugural, he started one. It's time to join that conversation.

Specifically, it's time to talk about what he can do right now, administratively—without waiting for an end to congressional gridlock, or trying to get the international community to agree to a binding climate treaty—to secure a safer, healthier planet for our children.

Locally, our chapter of the Sierra Club is proud of the town halls on local energy we've held all over the county, and the fact that we got Community Choice—California's best mechanism for developing clean, local power—included in the climate action plans of both the city and county of SLO. But ultimately, the solution to the problem has to happen at the national level, and our nation has to lead the world. President Obama, using the powers of his office, can protect our lands, water, and wildlife from the threats of fossil-fuel development and climate change. He can stop the rush to expand oil and gas drilling, coal mining, and dirty fuels development on our public lands and the Outer Continental Shelf, reject proposals to import dirty fuels, and stop the rush of exports. (In particular, the Keystone XL tar sands pipeline has no place in America's energy future.) He can reform federal lending rules to enable homeowners to pay for energy upgrades through their property taxes, and he can double down again on clean energy, acknowledge that nuclear power is far from "clean" and that true energy independence is about reducing consumption while increasing efficiency and renewables. He can commit to remaking, re-localizing, and re-greening our energy systems in the name of a livable world, one based on a genuine prosperity instead of the continuous draw down of natural capital.

As Superstorm Sandy showed everyone, America needs a national climate-resilience plan that creates strong and sustainable communities, infrastructure, and ecosystems. The president can direct his agencies to protect communities from future climate disasters and prepare a robust and equitable response. Americans in large numbers now understand that extreme weather events will become worse and more frequent due to the unchecked upward spiral of climate-disrupting fossil fuel emissions. So while President Obama can do all the things listed above, he first needs to actually see those Americans in large numbers asking him to.

If you'd like to help get the word to the president and help him start his second term with a President's Day weekend to remember, please join the Sierra Club and 350.org as we bring the largest climate rally in history to the White House. The Forward on Climate rally will be held in Washington, D.C., on Feb. 17.

You can find chartered buses, carpools to D.C., personal housing in the area, and get answers to all your questions at action.sierraclub.org/feb17.

We're going to take the president up on his offer and ask him to seal his legacy through bold action on climate disruption. We hope you will be part of this historic occasion.

Greg McMillan, Pat Veasart, Lindi Doud, Joe Morris, Patrick McGibney, and Linda Seeley serve as the executive committee of the Sierra Club's Santa Lucia Chapter.