

Keystone Pledge of Resistance

Background



What have we done to the earth? This NASA photo taken by the Apollo 8 crew from space in 1968 makes it clear we live on a small planet with a fragile life support system.

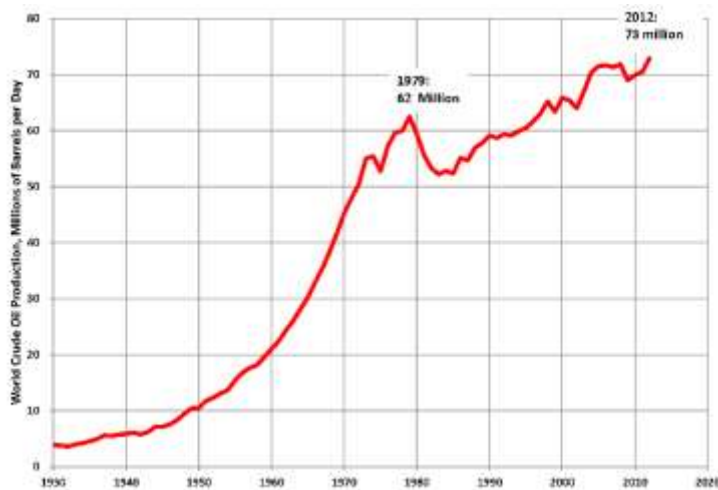
Most cultures honor the earth, and feel responsible to preserve our environment for future generations.

Since it takes thousands of years to produce fossil fuels from organic matter, our fossil fuel supplies cannot be replaced, i.e. they are nonrenewable.

But instead of protecting those energy resources, developed countries created increasingly complicated products and systems which consumed increasing amounts of energy. Homes and buildings became increasingly large, using great amounts of fuel for heating, air conditioning, and to power an increasing array of convenience and entertainment devices.

The extreme example of this waste of fossil fuels is the personal automobile. It didn't take long for nearly every family in the developed world to have not just one, but often multiple cars. Cars became a defining issue for me when my best friends wrecked mine 35 years ago. I had never been comfortable owning a car, so this was an opportunity to see if I could live without one. Indianapolis doesn't have the greatest public transportation system, but it works well enough that it has been possible for me to live without a car since that accident. For most of my career I took the bus to work, then ran home. That helped my training for the twenty three Mini Marathons I ran.

This chart shows the explosive growth in crude oil production that was needed to supply these demands:



1 en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Petroleum_industry

As large pools of oil were drained, it has become increasingly difficult to find sources of oil. This has led to extreme extraction practices of mountain top removal, tar sands extraction and fracking as alternative fossil fuel sources.

Unfortunately the problem is not just the rapid depletion of nonrenewable resources, but also the tremendous environmental damage that results from burning these massive amounts of fossil fuels. Carbon dioxide (CO₂) is produced when fossil fuels are burned. CO₂ is a greenhouse gas, which traps heat in the atmosphere. The CO₂ and heat are also absorbed by the vast waters of the oceans, with additional detrimental effects such as increasing acidity.

Beyond the moral questions all this poses, our very survival is now in question.

We got in this situation partly because we did not realize all the harmful effects that would occur. Things moved too quickly—irresponsibly in retrospect. But as the alarms began to be raised decades ago, those who profit from fossil fuels put a lot of effort and money into misleading the public, so their profits wouldn't be impacted. That became their mantra—profits before all else.

Part of my faith tradition is to be well informed about social justice issues. I am a Quaker, and a member of Iowa Yearly Meeting (Conservative). The conservative part is ironic. It refers to conserving traditional Quaker practices. Politically, we would be defined as liberal to radical. For years we have worked to be informed about these issues and the spiritual/moral problems they raise. The following is part of a Minute (approved statement) in 2008:

“Friends could help provide leadership by redesigning our communities and lifestyles in such a way that we can forego automobiles. Improved systems of inter- and intra-city mass transportation will be one key to this. There are organizations working to expand and improve rail passenger transportation. Creating more bicycle trails and encouraging the use of bicycles is important.”

Also, this was approved in 2013: **Members of Iowa Yearly Meeting (Conservative) oppose the practices of tar sands extraction and hydraulic fracturing.**

If we are going to survive, we need to make some drastic changes immediately. Energy conservation practices are the fastest and easiest way to reduce energy use.

But along with that, we have to immediately stop extreme extraction practices. We will be fortunate if humanity survives the damage that has already been done, without adding more. Unfortunately there is a time lag of several years until the effects of a given release of CO₂ are seen.

Keystone story

Several years ago environmental activists saw the Presidential approval of the proposed Keystone XL Pipeline as an opportunity to create a symbol of extreme extraction practices, and a chance to impede the fossil fuel industry's reckless actions. TransCanada wants to build Keystone XL to carry tar sands product from Canada to refineries on the Gulf of Mexico. Since the pipeline would cross the border between the U.S. and Canada, the construction would have to be approved by the President. This would be a well-defined decision, solely the President's to make, even though Congress did try to usurp that authority. But the President vetoed that effort.

Our tiny environmental movement knows the vast resources the fossil fuel industry has for influence of all types and at all levels of government. The only chance we had was to make it a moral issue. And to back up that moral stance with the threat of nonviolent civil disobedience if it came to that. Some environmentalists who talk with the President made sure he knew of our resistance movement early on.

RAN statement on nonviolence:

Rainforest Action Network (RAN) does not support or condone violence in any form. We believe that peaceful protest and civil disobedience are powerful forces for change in a democratic society, and we defend the rights of individuals and organizations to practice them.

RAN deplores any government-backed efforts that, under the guise of anti-terrorism, attempt to squelch public dissent and curtail civil liberties by criminalizing the constitutional right to peaceful protest. The government's use of taxpayer dollars to spy on environmental and social justice groups is fiscally and morally irresponsible, and sets a frightening precedent for all individuals wishing to effect social change.

The rest of this story is about the Keystone Pledge of Resistance, but it is very important to acknowledge and thank many Native American tribes and First Nations people who have been on the front lines of the tar sands resistance and awareness efforts in the US and Canada for many, many years. One such campaign of the Indigenous nations is called “Idle No More” which has trained hundreds in nonviolent civil disobedience. One of the delightful things to come out of the Keystone resistance in Nebraska has been the “Cowboy and Indian Alliance”.

So, the Rainforest Action Network (RAN) and CREDO created this campaign called the Keystone Pledge of Resistance. The campaign also became known as NOKXL. The Pledge, below, was posted on the Internet and people were invited to sign it. http://act.credoaction.com/sign/kxl_pledge. A movement was started. To date, over 97,000 people have signed.

"I pledge, if necessary, to join others in my community, and engage in acts of dignified, peaceful civil disobedience that could result in my arrest in order to send the message to President Obama and his administration that they must reject the Keystone XL pipeline."

One of the many things I love about this campaign is that everything is completely open (other than the usual considerations individuals deserve for their privacy protection).

The next step would be to organize local groups. On the web page to sign the Pledge, there was also a checkbox to indicate willingness to be a local leader. In the spring of 2015, twenty five cities in the US were identified as places where the Action Leader training would be offered, based upon the number of people and potential leaders in those locations. Indianapolis was not one of those cities. I traveled to Des Moines, Iowa, for my training. Others from Indianapolis were trained in St. Louis, and another in Cincinnati.

My trainers were Todd and Gabe from the Rainforest Action Network (action is our middle name) and took place at Iowa Citizens for Community Improvement. Todd Zimmer is on the far right in this photo, and he is holding the sign in the Change the Course photo at the end of this.



There were eight of us. After introductions, the training manual was distributed, and we began by studying the details of the Keystone XL Pipeline. We then studied nonviolence and civil disobedience. We discussed how to select and scout our targets. There were several role playing exercises related to de-escalation during actions, and the process of being arrested. We ended with a lengthy legal briefing. It was very well done. The second day of training involved us trainees being observed and evaluated while we presented the same training that we were given the day before.

"Congratulations on completing your training this past weekend! As an Action Lead, you are now a living, breathing, nonviolent threat to the Keystone XL Pipeline. We at Rainforest Action Network are very glad you have stepped up, and ready to support you in your role. All of us at Rainforest Action Network are honored to be working with you on this historic effort. You inspire us."

Back in Indianapolis, the trained Action Leaders got together and planned our local action, which would be to block the doors of the Federal building in downtown Indianapolis. The Pledge of Resistance campaign provided tools for us to post our action online, so others could sign up to participate. This is how the local movements formed. We contacted these people to inform them of when and where the local training would occur. Since then we have held six training sessions, have filled all the roles necessary for our action, such as police liaison, press, legal, etc. and are ready to go.

Numerous legal/political events have since occurred, such as changing the route of the pipeline so less of it would be built over the Ogallala aquifer, the release of the State Department's environmental impact statement related to Keystone, the "Harvest of Hope" concert with Neil Young and Willie Nelson to oppose the pipeline, and attempts by the U.S. Congress to force the approval of the pipeline (which was vetoed by President Obama). In Nebraska, the use of eminent domain to seize land for the pipeline construction was invalidated, halting progress there.

Our Keystone group organized numerous rallies and marches in downtown Indianapolis. Every Friday afternoon a peace vigil is held in front of the Federal building (our target) in downtown Indianapolis. I began bringing a "STOP KEYSTONE PIPELINE" sign to hold every week instead of "War Is Not the Answer" that others held.

In November, 2013, I was in Washington, DC, to attend the annual meeting of the Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL). I'm a member of the General Committee, and have learned how to lobby my legislators. That year I visited with Nathan Bennett, Congressman Andre Carson's Legislative Director. I was a little apprehensive about discussing breaking the law in that setting, but Nathan proved to be very knowledgeable about the subject and we had a very pleasant discussion about the Keystone Pledge of Resistance.

Several letters to the editor were published by the Indianapolis Star:



Joe Donnelly's Keystone pipeline vote disregards dirty results



(Photo: Rob Goebel/The Star)

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I am disappointed that Sen. Joe Donnelly has joined Senate Republicans to try to force a vote on the Keystone XL pipeline. This is an executive branch decision and not that of Congress. The senator's press release says he supports Keystone because of the jobs, when even TransCanada admits the pipeline will produce fewer than 100 permanent jobs. He also repeats the "all-in" approach to the future of energy, disregarding the tons of pollution and resulting health damage that will occur from continuing to burn fossil fuels.

Jeff Kisling

Indianapolis



RAN Coal Team @dirtyenergy · May 15

.@ran activist @jakislin calls out @sendonnelly on willfully ignoring the dangers of #KXL a.ran.org/iS #NoKXL

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RAN @RAN · May 15

.@ran activist @jakislin calls out @sendonnelly on willfully ignoring the dangers of #KXL a.ran.org/iS #NoKXL

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INDYSTAR
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U.S. needs to address climate change

IndyStar 5:09 p.m. EDT September 25, 2014



(Photo: Kelly Wilkinson/The Star.)

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I believe that climate change is a moral issue. I believe that we have a responsibility to care for the Earth, marginalized peoples and future generations.

On Sept. 20 hundreds of people marched to the Capitol building as part of the launch of the Indiana Moral Mondays movement, which is a grassroots movement urging addressing social justice issues in the state legislature, one of the most important of which is environmental justice.

On Sept. 21, hundreds of thousands of people marched in the People's Climate March in New York City to show our friends, family and elected officials that now is our moment to take swift and strong action to address climate disruption.

This week world leaders gathered for a United Nations meeting to address the global environmental crisis.

I call on Rep. Andre Carson and Sens. Joe Donnelly and Dan Coats to be among the leaders in creating and passing legislation to address the impacts of climate change.

Jeff Kisling

Indianapolis

INDYSTAR
A GANNETT COMPANY

Keystone XL pipeline threatens environment

4:25 p.m. EST February 18, 2015



(Photo: AP file)

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The Keystone XL pipeline is a threat to our national security. The carcinogen benzene is usually used to dilute the tar sands enough that it can flow. The completed southern leg of the pipeline was supposed to leak only once in seven years, but leaked 12 times the first year. There won't be

enough bottled water to save us if the Ogallala Aquifer, which this pipeline would sit on top of, is contaminated. Not only do the pipelines leak, but past spills are still not cleaned up, years later.

Jeff Kisling, Indianapolis

Where are we now?

It is becoming increasingly difficult to try to ignore our changing climate. Historically extreme weather events have forced public awareness. Water supplies have been contaminated from oil spills, fracking, and lakes of toxic waste water from tar sands extraction. Increasing seismic activity has been linked to hydraulic fracturing. Dramatic increases in cancer rates are found in populations unfortunate enough to live near tar sands or fracking sites.

Our politicians continue to refuse to address these problems, and continue to provide the fossil fuel industry with billions of dollars in subsidies. Fortunately, President Obama has resisted this. Improved vehicle emission standards, Federal building energy efficiency standards, and EPA expansion of water protections are good, but not nearly enough. He has resisted the intense pressures from the fossil fuel industry, Canadian government, and politicians to approve the Keystone Pipeline, so far. His insistence that the legal processes stipulated for international pipeline approval be observed have had the practical effect of stopping Keystone thus far.

That has given us time to try to inform the public about the dangers of continued fossil fuel combustion, and progress is evident. Rolling Stone has published a couple of articles by Bill McKibben which clearly explained these issues. Hopefully our Keystone Pledge of Resistance efforts have had an effect, as well. The Guardian has recently launched a campaign called "Keep It in the Ground". The fossil fuel divestment campaign is growing significantly. Several Canadian tar sands expansion projects have been terminated.

The final step before the President makes his decision about the Keystone Pipeline is the State Department's National Interest Determination, explained here from the State Department website. The website mentions the department is evaluating the 2.5 million public comments that were submitted (including mine).

The Presidential Permit review process focuses on whether the proposed Project serves the national interest, which involves consideration of many factors including: energy security; environmental, cultural, and economic impacts; foreign policy; and compliance with relevant federal regulations and issues. During this time, the Department will consult with, at least, the eight agencies identified in Executive Order 13337: the Departments of Defense, Justice, Interior, Commerce, Transportation, Energy, Homeland Security, and the Environmental Protection Agency. <http://keystonepipeline-xl.state.gov/>

If the State Department determines the pipeline is in the national interest, that will trigger the Keystone Pledge of Resistance, and acts of nonviolent civil disobedience will occur all over the United States.

We haven't stopped there, though. RAN's new initiative is Change the Course. I attended a training session last fall in Louisville where this idea was being developed. <http://www.changethecourse.org/> This is a website that invites us all to share the vision of the future we would like to see, and how we plan to get there. The synergy here will help us learn from each other.



RAN, Change the Course, Louisville



In front of our Indianapolis target, the Federal building.

Appendix

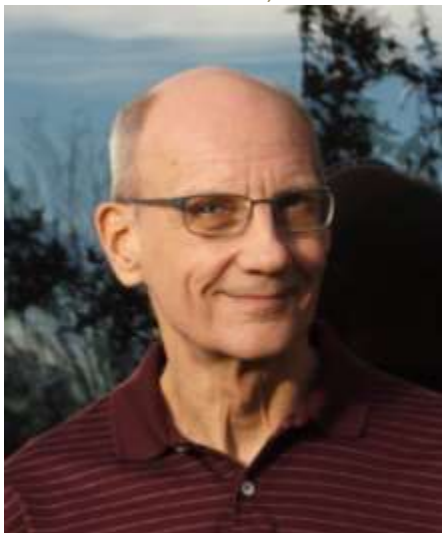


**American Friends
Service Committee**

From <<http://www.afsc.org/story/quaker-pledges-resistance-keystone>>

Quaker pledges resistance to Keystone

Published: December 8, 2014



Jeff Kisling is an Indianapolis Friend who co-clerks the Peace and Social Concerns Committee of the Iowa Yearly Meeting of Friends (Conservative). Jeff is an avid photographer whose work can be found [here](#).

Photo: AFSC

I plan to be arrested at the Federal Building in an act of peaceful, nonviolent civil disobedience to protest against the Keystone pipeline in the event that recommendations from the State Department for approval, or passage of legislation to approve the pipeline are sent to the President. I've been trained, and in turn have helped train over 4,000 people across the United States to prepare for these actions as part of the Keystone Pledge of Resistance.

Native Americans and other environmental organizations have also been training hundreds of others for this purpose. Midwest farmers have joined the cause as part of the "Cowboy and Indian Alliance."

We feel this strongly about this because of the threat to our water and the very survival of future generations. The pipeline would be built over the Ogallala aquifer, the vast underground water supply for the center of the nation. The history of pipeline spills guarantees there will be spills from Keystone.

This is all the more worrisome because such a high percentage (over 70% one month) of the welds on the pipeline did not pass inspection and had to be redone. Additionally, the oil flowing through the pipeline is under over 1,000 pounds per square inch of pressure, so leaks shoot out of the pipe (like the photos of the oil gushing out of the Horizon BP oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico). The thick tars sands oil is extremely difficult to clean up. Tar sands spills are not yet cleaned up years after they occurred.

The other part of this is all the additional carbon dioxide (CO₂) that will be dumped into the atmosphere. The science is clear that we have to drastically reduce CO₂ emissions now. If not, increasing greenhouse gases will continue to trap more heat, and the oceans will continue to get even more acidic from the CO₂ the water has to absorb. That will have very negative impacts on crops and food production. The very survival of future generations is on the line here.

Politicians try to sell the pipeline as a job creator, even though the TransCanada application to the State Department says less than 50 permanent jobs will result. The latest figures show 22,240 new jobs in the solar industry alone. We can't allow political sound bites about jobs to push us into this disaster.

Even if you deny climate change, the threat to the water supply alone makes Keystone a terrible, unacceptable risk. For 35 jobs? For billions in profits for TransCanada?

From <<http://www.afsc.org/story/quaker-pledges-resistance-keystone>>