Build Back Fossil Free

Deadly Poisons in Coal, Oil, and Natural Gas

The Biden Administration claims it is dedicated to Building Back Better from the COVID pandemic, the resulting economic doldrums America faces, and the real and accelerating impacts of climate change. On the climate front, we must begin by demanding that fossil fuels stay where they belong: in the ground.

To avoid the worst impacts of climate change, we need to move away from coal, oil, and natural gas, and toward a renewable-energy future. The path to a sustainable future for people, ecosystems, and the climate cannot include fossil fuels.

The consequences are deadly. More than 8 million people died in 2018 from fossil-fuel pollution, significantly higher than previous research suggested, according to a study by Harvard University and leading European universities. Researchers estimated that exposure to particulate matter from fossil fuel emissions accounted for 18 percent of total global deaths in 2018 – nearly 1 in 5. Regions with the highest concentrations of fossil fuel-related air pollution – including Eastern North America, Europe, and South-East Asia – have the highest rates of mortality.

Communities of color, economic hardship, and Indigenous peoples are particularly vulnerable because the fossil-fuel industry so often builds its polluting infrastructure in these environmental justice communities

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPPC) found that total future carbon dioxide emissions must be less than 1,000 gigatons to provide a 66% chance of avoiding the most dangerous impacts of climate change. Only 33% of known extractable fossil-fuel reserves can be used. This carbon budget can also be depleted by an increase in other carbon-emission sources, such as deforestation and cement production. If other carbon emissions increase significantly, then just 10% of the fossil-fuel reserves can be used to stay within projected safe limits.

According to the NASA Goddard Institute for Space Studies, 19 of the warmest years on record have occurred since 2000. The year 2020 was the warmest since record-keeping began in in 1880. This finding is broadly consistent with similar constructions prepared by the Climate Research Unit, of the University of East Anglia, and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

Furthermore, according to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), earth's average temperature has risen by 0.78°C (1.4°F) over the past century and is predicted to rise another 1.1 to 6.4 C° (2.0 to 11.5°F) over the next 100 years at continued carbon-emission rates. This rise in temperature would far surpass the level of warming that scientists have deemed safe to support life on earth as we know it. Some scientists say the rise may be far greater unless decisive action is taken immediately.