

What's happening in the environment?

Written by Staff Reports

Friday, 17 September 2021 03:26



Kickoff call for a fossil-free future Sept. 9 at 5 pm MT

A campaign called the Fossil Free Resistance will be in Washington, D. C. Oct. 11-15 to call for a fossil-free future.

It will kick off with a call Sept. 9 at 5 pm at <https://bit.ly/38WWYq1>, which provides a description of the effort and will help those wishing to attend to find a ride to the event.

Organizers want President Biden to become the climate president he promised to be before attending the global climate talks. They believe he has taken important first steps, but failed to stop fossil fuel projects that continue to power the climate emergency, violate the rights of Indigenous people, and threaten wildlife and communities with toxic pollution.

This multi-day action is designed to provide ways to make a difference.

Congress to support endangered species

House Democrats said they will provide \$550 million to the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service in the upcoming budget reconciliation package. In a Sept. 2 article in "Endangered Earth," the Center for Biological Diversity said those funds will include \$100 million for some of the rarest species in the U. S.

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The legislation will include \$25 million to conserve and restore four of the most imperiled types of endangered species in the United States: butterflies, eastern freshwater mussels, Southwest desert fish and Hawaiian plants.

The reconciliation language mirrors Chairman Raúl Grijalva's, D-Ariz. Extinction Prevention Act of 2021 (H.R. 3396), which would fund on-the-ground conservation actions to stabilize the four groups of struggling endangered species.

A 2016 study found that Congress only provides approximately 3.5 percent of the estimated funding the Fish and Wildlife Service's scientists say is needed to recover species. Roughly one in four species receives less than \$10,000 a year toward recovery, and many of the endangered species that will benefit from this funding receive nothing for recovery in a given year.

The legislation will also provide an additional \$240 million for Endangered Species Act activities, including \$150 million for recovery plans, \$50 million for Habitat Conservation Plans and \$40 million for interagency consultations.

"The Fish and Wildlife Service has been operating on a shoestring budget for decades, and we've lost species to extinction because of it," Brett Hartl, government affairs director at the Center for Biological Diversity said. "The American people care deeply about saving life on Earth, and it's fantastic to see Congress finally addressing the historic shortfalls in funding for wildlife conservation."

Also included in the committee's allocation is \$100 million for climate change mitigation, \$100 million for protecting and restoring grasslands, and \$10 million for wildlife corridors.

Four environmental groups file to stop oil, gas lease sale

Earthjustice filed a civil action Aug. 31 on behalf of Friends of the Earth, Healthy Gulf, the Sierra Club and the Center for Biological Diversity to challenge the decision to hold Offshore Oil and Gas Lease Sale 257 in the Gulf of Mexico.

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The plaintiff groups had previously sent a letter to Sec. Deb. Haaland on legal alternatives to this lease sale.

Last month the United Nations affirmed that the climate crisis is “unequivocally” the result of human influence and that this influence now has a strong hand in climate and weather extremes. The Gulf region has been feeling these extremes as just two days ago the region saw one of the strongest and most rapidly intensifying hurricanes ever to make landfall.

Interior's own estimates show that the sale will lead to the production of up to 1.12 billion barrels of oil and 4.2 trillion cubic feet of gas over the next 50 years, which will contribute substantial greenhouse gas emissions.

“In the aftermath of Hurricane Ida, it is clear that we need to be doing everything we can to transition away from fossil fuels to reduce the impacts of climate change such as stronger, more frequent hurricanes,” Cynthia Sarthou, executive director of Healthy Gulf, said. “Continuing to sell leases that allow business as usual is a bad decision.”

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