Stage Is Set For Clean Energy In 2014

Natural Resources Defense Council

WASHINGTON (December 12, 2013) – In a key year for the American people's health and the environment, the nation has expanded clean energy and efficiency and acted against climate change, but further steps are needed to protect our communities and public health in 2014, according to experts at the Natural Resources Defense Council.

In a year-in-review and a look-ahead national telephone press briefing today, six NRDC federal climate and energy policy experts gave high marks to the Obama Administration for launching a comprehensive climate action plan. Its centerpiece aims to curb dangerous power plant pollution driving climate change. They also noted that an onslaught of attacks by House Republicans on the environment had been successfully turned back.

The NRDC experts said these advances need to continue in 2014, and noted that high-profile issues loom. That includes a decision on the proposed Keystone XL tar sands pipeline and the growing public concerns about the damage caused by natural gas fracking.

David Goldston, director of government affairs for NRDC, said: "In many ways, 2013 has been a very positive year for the environment and the environmental movement. 2014 will be a key year for many issues to come to fruition. We want to see the Environmental Protection Agency issuing standards limiting power plant carbon pollution, the rejection of the Keystone XL tar sands pipeline and greater action to protect people and communities from the risks of fracking for oil and gas. On Capitol Hill, we will need to continue to defend the laws that protect health and the environment and to halt the chipping away at the National Environmental Policy Act, which ensures that the public has a voice in reviewing major projects."

Pete Altman, director of the climate and clean air campaign for NRDC, said: "This year and the coming year are about protecting public health and the environment from the dangerous pollution released when we produce and generate energy from fossil fuels. It's worth noting that despite deep-pocketed attempts by fossil fuel-backed groups like the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC) and Americans for Prosperity (AFP) to repeal commonsense state renewable energy standards, lawmakers in Kansas, North Carolina, Ohio – and every other state that saw such attacks – decided those standards are working well."

David Doniger, policy director for NRDC's Climate and Clean Air Program, said: "Indeed, the biggest news in 2013 for the climate has been President Obama's Climate Action Plan. This set in motion decisive steps to come to grips with the pollution that drives climate change. Now the task is to see all the initiatives in the plan over the finish line. In 2014, we'll be focused like a laser beam on making sure

EPA power plant standards -- which states then will implement -- capture the full potential to cut carbon pollution using all techniques, including energy efficiency and renewable power. Other big steps also are needed: curbing methane leakage up and down the oil and gas sector, and transitioning away from the super-potent HFCs in our refrigerators and air conditioners."

John Walke, Clean Air Director for NRDC, addressed energy-related issues arising in Congress and the courts. "This year, environmental leaders in Congress have succeeded in repelling attacks on the Clean Air Act and we expect there will be fewer misguided efforts in 2014 to undermine its public health protections, with no greater prospects for success. At the same time, the administration needs to move ahead on clean vehicle fuel standards, on strengthening national health standards for ozone, tougher standards curbing hazardous pollution from oil refineries, and rules reducing harmful particulates in our air."

Danielle Droitsch, an attorney in NRDC's international program who focuses on the proposed Keystone XL tar sands pipeline, said: "Focus on Keystone XL will ramp up in the coming months with the State Department's release of the final environmental impact statement, but that will only begin a new process for the National Interest Determination and a renewed opportunity for Americans to speak out against this dirty energy project that will drive tar sands development and worsen climate change. Last summer, President Obama said he would not approve the pipeline if it worsened climate change. Every day we're seeing more evidence why the Keystone XL tar sands pipeline fails that test and should be denied."

Amy Mall, senior analyst in NRDC's land and wildlife program and an expert on hydraulic fracturing, said: "There has been quite a lot happening on fracking this year—at the federal level, as well as state and community levels around the country. And we expect that to continue to be the case in the coming year. The issues range from impacts to health and drinking water, to community rights. Communities across the country are concerned about this dirty energy development that is occurring right in their backyards. It is bringing odd bedfellows together from all sides of the political spectrum to call for change and demand protection."

The Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) is an international nonprofit environmental organization with more than 1.4 million members and online activists. Since 1970, our lawyers, scientists, and other environmental specialists have worked to protect the world's natural resources, public health, and the environment. Visit them at www.nrdc.org and follow on Twitter @NRDC.

Source URL (retrieved on *09/21/2014 - 8:24pm*):

http://www.chem.info/news/2013/12/stage-set-clean-energy-2014?qt-most_popular=0