

MARIN INDEPENDENT JOIURNAL PRE-EVENT COVERAGE

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Activists applaud Keystone rejection

Decision lifts spirits for climate change forum

By Richard Halstead

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Participants in a forum on climate change set for Monday at Dominican University celebrated news Friday that President Obama had rejected the Keystone XL oil pipeline application.

"I'm very pleased to see this strong and appropriate action," said Rep. Jared Huffman, D-San Rafael. "This could be a historic turning point. I hope we can build on this."

Josh Fryday, who serves as chief operating officer at Next-Gen Climate Action in San Francisco, said, "We've always felt that the Keystone pipeline would have been a bad deal for Americans. This is another example of our government and the people saying yes to clean energy. We're seeing a lot of momentum for a clean energy future."

Fryday, who won election to the Novato City Council on Tuesday, said Next-Gen and its founder, retired hedge fund manager Tom Steyer, played a prominent role in helping to defeat Keystone. NextGen backs candidates across the country who are interested in addressing climate change.

Huffman and Fryday are just two of the prominent speakers who will address attendees during Monday's "Time to Lead on Climate," forum in Marin. Other speakers will include Ken Alex, a senior policy adviser to Gov. Jerry Brown, and Susan Stephenson, executive director of Interfaith Power & Light, an organization of religious groups seeking to respond to global warming.

Opening message

Bill McKibben, the founder of 350.org, which is battling climate change through grassroots organizing and mass public demonstrations, will deliver the event's opening message via video. McKibben has spoken at Dominican University in the past.

"He's trying not to chalk up so many jet miles these days," said Bill

Carney, president of Sustainable San Rafael, which together with Organizing For Action Marin, is sponsoring the forum. Organizing for Action is a national 501(c)(4) nonprofit that grew out of the remnants of Obama's reelection campaign.

Carney said he and OFA leader Belle Cole decided to organize the event now due to the United Nations climate change conference, which begins on Nov. 30, and the upcoming presidential election.

"We were thinking about how to move the momentum that has been gathering for climate action forward to the next level of really getting some systemic change," Carney said.

Cole said she wants to broaden the community that is paying attention to climate change and believes that Pope Francis' recent call to action on climate change may help to do that. Interfaith Power's Stephenson will discuss the moral imperative of climate action. Fliers advertising the event have been distributed in San Rafael's predominately Latino neighborhood and presentations will be translated into Spanish.

"It's important that it won't just be the same people talking to each other," Cole said.

Proclamation

A raft of other Marin nonprofits are also participating in the forum. The list includes: 350Marin.org, Sustainable Marin, Environmental Forum of Marin, Marin School of Environmental Leadership, Cool the Earth, Marin Conservation League, Citizens Climate Lobby, Resilient Neighborhoods, Shore Up Marin, and Golden Gate Electric Vehicle Association.

These and another dozen environmental and community groups have signed a "Marin Proclamation on Climate," which will be presented to Huffman and Alex on Monday. Both men will be attending the Paris conference.

"The proclamation is going to be of interest to those going to Paris," Cole said, "because they can say, 'Look what a community can do if they get themselves together.' We think it is helpful to them to know we have their back."

Fryday said he will talk about how to take advantage of the momentum building around action on climate change in the upcoming elections.

Huffman said, "Some of the good news that I intend to share with the group is that many of the arguments that we have heard over the last

decade against taking bold action on climate change are really going up in smoke.”

Huffman said that includes the assertion that other major emitting nations around the world are unwilling to do their part.

“We’re now seeing major commitments from all over the world,” he said.

And attendees of Monday’s forum will learn about how they can get directly involved in action on climate change at the local level.

“We’re encouraging people to come early,” Carney said. “There will be a slide show going on as the audience gathers that identifies actions that people can take and the organizations they can get involved with in supporting those actions.”