

Biden halts public oil, gas leases

■ President says executive orders will ‘supercharge’ effort to combat climate change

By Matthew Daly and Ellen Knickmeyer
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — In the most ambitious U.S. effort to stave off the worst of climate change, President Joe Biden signed executive orders Wednesday to transform the nation's heavily fossil-fuel powered economy into a clean-burning one, pausing oil and gas leasing on federal land and targeting subsidies for those industries.

The directives aim to conserve 30 percent of the country's lands and waters in the next 10 years, double the nation's offshore wind energy, and move to an all-electric federal vehicle fleet, among other changes. Biden's sweeping plan is aimed at staving off the worst of global warming caused by burning fossil fuels.

But his effort also carries political risk for the president and Democrats as oil- and coal-producing states face job losses from moves to sharply increase U.S. reliance on clean energy such as wind and solar power.

“We can't wait any longer” to address the climate crisis, Biden said at the White House. “We see with our own eyes. We know it in our bones. It is time to act.”

He said his orders will “supercharge our administration's ambitious plan to confront the existential threat of climate change.”

Biden has set a goal of eliminating pollution from fossil fuel in the power sector by 2035 and from the U.S. economy overall by 2050, speeding what is already a market-driven growth of solar and wind energy and lessening the country's dependence on oil and gas. The aggressive plan is aimed at slowing human-caused global warming that is magnifying extreme weather events such as deadly wildfires in the West and drenching rains and hurricanes in the East.



Al Seib/TNS

An oil well in Southern California.

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— President Joe Biden

Biden acknowledged the political risk, repeatedly stating that his approach would create jobs in the renewable energy and automotive sectors to offset any losses in oil, coal or natural gas.

“When I think of climate change and the answers to it, I think of jobs,” Biden said. “We're going to put people to work. We're not going to lose jobs. These aren't pie-in-the-sky dreams. These are concrete actionable solutions. And we know how to do this.”

In a change from previous administrations of both parties, Biden also is directing agencies to focus help and investment on the low-income and minority communities that live closest to polluting refineries and other hazards, and the oil- and coal-patch towns that face job losses as the U.S. moves to sharply increase its reliance on wind, solar and other energy sources that do not emit climate-warming greenhouse gases.

Biden pledged to create up to a million jobs building electric cars, as well as installing solar panels, wind turbines, “capping abandoned walls, reclaiming mines, turning old brownfield sites into the new hubs of economic growth.”

Republicans immediately criticized the plan as a job killer.

“Pie-in-the-sky government mandates and directives that restrict our mining, oil, and gas industries adversely impact our energy security and independence,” said Rep. Cathy McMorris Rodgers of Washington state, the top Republican on the House Energy and Commerce Committee.

Biden also is elevating the warming climate to a national security priority, directing intelligence agencies, the military and others to do more to prepare for the heightened risks. The conservation plan would set aside millions of acres for recreation, wildlife and climate efforts by 2030 as part of Biden's campaign pledge for a \$2 trillion program to slow global warming.

President Donald Trump, who ridiculed the science of climate change, withdrew the U.S. from the Paris global climate accord, opened more public lands to coal, gas and oil production and weakened regulation on fossil

fuel emissions. Experts say these emissions are heating the Earth's climate dangerously and worsening floods, droughts and other natural disasters.

Currently, 61% of the nation's electric power comes from natural gas and coal, 20% from nuclear and 17% from wind, solar and other renewable energy, the U.S. Energy Information Administration says.

Georgia Tech climate scientist Kim Cobb said that “if this Day 7 momentum is representative of this administration's 4-year term, there is every reason to believe that we might achieve carbon neutrality sooner than 2050,” even as key roadblocks lie ahead.

Biden's actions came as his nominee for energy secretary, former Michigan Gov. Jennifer Granholm, faced deep skepticism from Republicans as she tried to pitch the president's vision for a green economy.

“The last Democratic administration went on a regulatory rampage to slow or stop energy production,” said Wyoming Sen. John Barrasso, a leading Republican on the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee. “I'm not going to sit idly by ... if the Biden administration enforces policies that threaten Wyoming's economy.”

Granholm, the leader of a state devastated by the 2008 recession, promoted emerging clean energy technologies, such as battery manufacturing, as an answer for jobs that will be lost as the U.S. transitions away from fossil fuels.

Granholm and other officials said the investment in cleaner energy national will net millions of jobs. But that probably will take years to happen, and the orders will face intense opposition from oil and gas and power plant industries, as well as from many Republican — and possibly Democratic — lawmakers.

COVID-19

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Moving the schools group ahead of seniors meant the start date for inoculation of older Oregonians living independently was pushed back from Monday to Feb. 8. Even then, only those over 80 can apply at first. The eligibility age will drop five years each week, until those 65 and over are eligible March 1.

Oregon is the only state that has placed educators above seniors in priority for the vaccine.

Allen defended the decision, saying that Brown and OHA are trying to balance a variety of health needs. Getting educators vaccinated could return children to in-class instruction, which state education experts say will improve their learning, as well as emotional and physical health.

“We are trying to accommodate a lot of different health objectives,” Allen said. “We are making progress.”

Opponents of Brown's decision to prioritize teachers and school workers say that there is no guarantee that teachers will return to the classroom if children aren't vaccinated.

VIRUS

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The issue is timing.

The county's risk level for the period Jan. 29 through Feb. 12 is based on its COVID-19 statistics, both new case counts and test positivity rate, from Jan. 10-23.

If the county during that period had either 60 or more new cases, or a positivity rate of 10% or higher, it qualified for the extreme-risk category.

For the first of those two weeks, Baker County had 52 new cases.

But in the second week the tally was 12.

The downward trend continued through Tuesday, Jan. 26, with just three new cases between Jan. 24-26.

The positivity rate, which was 14.6% from Jan. 10-23, has also dropped, to 5.8%.

If those trends continue through Feb. 6, then the county should drop from extreme risk starting Feb. 12. That would allow restaurants to resume limited indoor dining.

At the current pace — 17 new cases in 11 days — the county could potentially drop to moderate or low risk.

At moderate risk, restaurants could have indoor dining at 50% of capacity or 100 total people, including customers and staff, whichever is fewer. At low risk, restaurants could have indoor dining to 50% of capacity, with no other limits on occupancy.

Baker County CHURCH DIRECTORY

BAKER CITY CHRISTIAN CHURCH
Sunday Worship
First Service 8:30 AM
2nd Service & Sunday School 10 AM
Jr. High & High School Youth Tues 6:30 PM
Youth Pastor Silas Moe
675 Hwy 7, Baker City • 541-523-5425

Harvest Church
EARLY WORSHIP GATHERING 8:30 AM
SECOND WORSHIP GATHERING 10:30 AM
3720 Birch St, Baker City
541-523-4233

SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH
Saturday Worship 11:00 AM
www.bakercitydsa.com
17th & Pocahontas, Baker City
541-523-4913

SAINT ALPHONSUS HOSPITAL CHAPEL
Open to all patients, family and friends for reflection and prayer.
St. Alphonsus Hospital in Baker City

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
Sunday Worship Service 10:30 AM
1995 4th Street, Baker City
541-523-5201
firstpresbaker.blogspot.com

Calvary Baptist Church
Third & Broadway
541-523-3891
Sundays 10 AM Worship Service
9 AM Sunday School
Thursdays 5:30 - 6 PM
Free Community Dinner 6:15 - 8 PM
Celebrate Recovery
bakercalvarybaptist.com

CHRISTIAN SCIENCE CHURCH
Sunday Service 11:00 AM
www.ChristianScience.com
3rd & Washington, Baker City
541-523-5911

Elkhorn Baptist Church
Sunday School 10 AM
Morning Worship 11 AM
Evening Worship 6 PM
Discovery Kids Worship 6:30 PM
3520 Birch St, Baker City
541-523-4332

FIRST LUTHERAN CHURCH
Service at 11 am
September through the last Sunday of May
1734 Third Street, Baker City
541-523-3922
firstlutheranbakercity@gmail.com

Baker City Church of the Nazarene
Sunday Worship 9:00 AM & 10:30 AM
Pastor Troy Teeter
1250 Hughes Lane, Baker City
(Corner of Cedar & Hughes)
541-523-3533
www.bakernaz.com

St. Stephen's Episcopal
Services at 9 AM
1st & 3rd Sundays, Holy Eucharist
2nd & 4th Sundays, Morning Prayer
5th Sunday, Morning Prayer
2177 First Street • Baker City
Entrance on 1st Street
Corner Church & First Streets
541-523-4812

ST. BRIGID'S IN THE PINES COMMUNITY CHURCH
11:30 a.m. Services
1st & 3rd Sunday
Holy Eucharist
East Auburn Street, Sumpter
541-523-4812
A Mission of St. Stephen's Episcopal Church in Baker City

St. Francis De Sales Cathedral
Daily Masses: M, T, Th, F 9 AM
Day Chapel in Cathedral
Wed Daily Mass 9 AM at St. Alphonsus Chapel
Sat 8 AM at Day Chapel
Baker City Saturday Mass 6 pm
Baker City Sunday Mass 9:30 am
St. Therese in Halfway 2 pm Sat
St. Anthony's in North Powder 11:30 Sun
541-523-4521
Corner of First & Church, Baker City

AGAPE CHRISTIAN CENTER
Sunday Services 10:00 AM & 6:30 PM
South Highway 7, Baker City
541-523-6586

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