



Written by [Bob Adelman](#) on January 15, 2016

Interior Secretary Halts All New Coal Mining on Public Lands

On Friday President Obama's Interior secretary, Sally Jewell, [announced](#) a moratorium on new federal coal leases, claiming that her agency needs time to review the rules:

Given serious concerns raised about the federal coal program, we're taking the prudent step to hit pause on approving significant new leases.

We haven't undertaken a comprehensive review of the program in more than 30 years and we have an obligation to current and future generations to ensure the federal coal program delivers a fair return to American taxpayers and takes into account its impacts on climate change.



The announcement came just three days after the president stated in his State of the Union speech, "I'm going to push to change the way we manage our oil and coal resources, so that they better reflect the costs they impose on taxpayers and our planet."

This is in line with the president's goal of shuttering America's coal industry. As far back as 2008, he told the *San Francisco Chronicle*: "If somebody wants to build a coal-powered plant, they can. It's just that it will bankrupt them because they are going to be charged a huge sum for all that greenhouse gas that's being emitted."

As William F. Jasper noted in *The New American* last August, nearly 300 of America's 700 coal-fired power plants had already gone off line. With the pressure of low natural gas prices and draconian edicts issued by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), four coal companies have already gone bankrupt.

The latest one, Arch Coal, is (or was) the second-largest coal company in the United States. It filed for bankruptcy on Monday this week. That means that one-quarter of all U.S. coal production is now in bankruptcy.

As Professor Daniel Schrag, one of Obama's top environmental advisors, told the *New York Times*, the Obama administration is waging a war on coal:

Politically, the White House is hesitant to say they're [conducting] a war on coal. On the other hand, a war on coal is exactly what's needed.

It's a war that environmental extremists are winning. Despite a ruling by the Supreme Court last June — in the narrowest of votes, 5-4 — that overturned a small part of the EPA's harshest diktats, the EPA is hardly likely to be hampered in its attempts to fulfill the president's goal.



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One of the prime movers and enablers of Obama's plan to leave all energy resources in the ground is Bill McKibben. McKibben, an environmental activist without a science degree but with plenty of Rockefeller money, formed the "Step-It-Up" campaign as a tool to generate support for environmental regulation. "Step-It-Up" became 350.org, the prime mover behind Obama's decision in November to reject the Keystone XL pipeline project. Following that success, McKibben and 350.org have turned their attention to the coal industry. Said Jamie Henn, a spokesman for the group, "The administration's top priority [now] needs to be to keep fossil fuels in the ground. [We support] any move that increases the cost of extracting fossil fuels on public land."

McKibben's activities and successes have caught the attention of Stanley Kurtz, the author of a three-part series, *Fossil-Fuel Development*, on McKibben's efforts to return the United States to the dark ages. McKibben's goal is to put every American back on the farm, growing his own fruits and vegetables. Wrote Kurtz:

[McKibben] is arguing for a return to relatively self-sufficient local communities, especially when it comes to food. Modern agriculture feeds huge numbers of people at a very low price. Yet industrial farming is carbon-intensive, from the fertilizers, to the combines, to the planes and ships that transport all that produce around the globe.

McKibben wants to undo this system with a large-scale return to the land. Labor-intensive (rather than carbon-intensive) agriculture would form the nucleus of a new, quasi-peasant society. Relatively self-sufficient local farming communities would be protected not only from global warming, but from capitalism's cycles of boom and bust....

Americans would consume pretty much only locally grown food....

Food would cost more, choice would be drastically reduced, and putting meals together would take a great deal more effort than it does today.

To claim that the president is doing everything in his power — outside and beyond that allowed by the Constitution — in order to return America to the dark ages (no pun intended) would not overstate the matter. Any fossil fuel — oil, natural gas or coal — is considered the enemy of the environment. After shutting down Keystone, McKibben is now focusing on doing the same with coal. Once that industry is emasculated, he and his group and his Rockefeller money will go after natural gas.

A graduate of an Ivy League school and a former investment advisor, Bob is a regular contributor to The New American magazine and blogs frequently at [LightFromTheRight.com](#), primarily on economics and politics. He can be reached at badelmann@thenewamerican.com.

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