

# Climate First!, Inc.

## 2015 ANNUAL REPORT

Paris deal moves us forward, but we have lots of work to do!



Climate First! embraced real success in its third full year of corporate campaigning around the climate issue. Its efforts to address carbon pollution and related unsustainable activities by companies in the Mid-Atlantic region and beyond bore fruit as two U.S. banks made substantial changes in their policies regarding coal financing. Such success was probably not coincidental as the organization's direct actions against one bank grew in number and geographical scope as the year wore on – on a mid-November day, Climate First! ran numerous actions in Washington, D.C. and Delaware simultaneously against the behemoth investment bank, Morgan Stanley. More generally, the nonprofit continued to collaborate in greater number and intensity with other groups and organizations in various trainings, direct actions, and other events. All the organizing work was surely responsible in some small way for the biggest prize of the year – the rejection of the Keystone XL pipeline by the U.S. government!

On an organizational level, Climate First! also made strides forward. Late in the year, it moved into an office, the first one outside of the founder's home, and filled the space with free furniture that a downsizing company was sending to the landfill. Climate First!'s online presence improved dramatically as a professional email marketing consultant volunteered a considerable amount of his time to installing a new email system. Also, critically, the organization participated in two professional fundraising campaigns during the year that helped

propel the nonprofit to its best financial year ever. And finally, Climate First!'s Board of Directors grew to eight members, the largest it has ever been.

Climate First! ended the year by attending the climate talks in Paris. The once-in-a-lifetime trip put the organization on the world stage which led to connections with other climate organizers and groups from around the world. Fittingly, the final day of the trip ended with Climate First! participating in a 10,000 person climate march near the Arc de Triomphe.

The following are some of the highlights from 2015:



- While the issue now may be an afterthought to many, in the early part of 2015, Climate First! was fervently organizing and/or attending demonstrations at the White House and U.S. State Department (daily!) against that old villain -- the Keystone XL Pipeline.



- In late January, Climate First! entered its first formal fund-raiser, the Polar Bear Plunge into the Potomac River, raising over \$1,500.00 for its work and that of the event's sponsor. Our blankets kept us warm!





- Despite a mini-blizzard in the Wash., D.C. area in February, numerous people showed-up to yet another Climate First! training on how to engage in civil disobedience at the Dept. of State over the ill-fated Keystone XL pipeline.

- We celebrated in early March with our long-standing coalition partner – Earth Quaker Action Team – the announcement by PNC Bank that it was moving away from financing coal mining companies that engage in the heinous practice of mountaintop removal (MTR). This was Climate First!’s first campaign victory ever, and it brought much momentum to the organization.



- People in the Washington, D.C. area always eagerly await the start of the annual Environmental Film Festival because it ushers in springtime in the nation’s capital. Climate First! staffed the panel that followed a series of films showing the horrific effects of war on the environment.





- As part of Climate Mobilization Day in late spring, Climate First! organized its first-ever event on the nation's Mall, just south of the National World War II Memorial. Those who attended the rally heard three speakers and others call for a mobilization by the U.S. Government to protect the climate, on the scale of its efforts against the Axis Powers in World War II. The successful rally ended with a loud march to the White House.



- Climate First! held its 2015 Annual Meeting in July where Board members and other interested folks heard a former EPA attorney talk about statutory solutions to carbon emissions. In addition, attendees heard a presentation as to why Climate First! should expand its coal campaign.





- Climate First! staffed tables at three local outdoor festivals during the year to raise awareness of the climate issue, and to recruit supporters. All three events were well-attended, and the organization's volunteers/supporters were there to share Climate First!'s mission, strategies, and tactics.



- When the Pope came to give his historic talk to the U.S. Congress in September, Climate First! rallied with thousands on the Mall. The Pontiff later came out on a balcony of the Capitol which energized the crowd.



- Climate First! organized its first direct action against Morgan Stanley in October for its financial support of mining companies that perform mountaintop removal (MTR) mining. After joining with other activist groups across the country in a campaign against the huge investment bank, it was no surprise when word got out soon after the “Day of Action” that Morgan Stanley was “very concerned.”



- And then the following month, Climate First! “upped the ante” when it ran four actions against Morgan Stanley, “hitting” numerous offices in Wash, D.C. and Delaware all on the same day. The overall campaign, which had now moved overseas, must have really scared the investment bank into some internal deliberations; in December, it issued a new coal financing policy that addressed many of our concerns.



- In front of the Chamber of Commerce in Washington, D.C., Climate First! joined others in telling the anti-climate protection organization that the Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP) wasn't good for the climate.



- Climate First!'s year ended with a trip to Paris to attend the United Nation's climate talks, AKA "COP21." While the accord that came out of COP21 didn't go nearly far enough to stop the climate from dangerously overheating, one can't ignore the fact that it was the first time in history that nearly every nation in the world agreed to limit their greenhouse gas emissions. And that was success!



- Above is the building – a former airplane hangar -- where the actual COP21 talks occurred.



- Just outside of the official U.N. talks, Climate First! participated in a protest against fracking.



- Climate First! felt most at home at the Climate Action Zone, a space far from the COP21 talks where many climate activists congregated.



- Climate First! had much to share at a nearby session about coal financing.



- On its final full day in Paris – December 12<sup>th</sup> – Climate First! attended a climate march with 10,000 others. Under pressure, the French government had, only hours before, relaxed the ban on protests under the country’s state of emergency. Still, French police were ready for trouble.



- With the talks now over, 10,000 people formed a red line with their bodies, with giant banners, and with 5,000 red tulips — a line that represented both the victims of the climate crisis, and our collective commitment to keep fighting to preserve the climate.

- Climate First! ended the eventful day by attending a climate rally at the Eiffel Tower. The fiery sign says it all.



In close, the year 2016 looks to be another busy year for Climate First!. It will continue to organize people in an effort to 1) build on the success of the Paris climate talks, and 2) push corporations to reduce their carbon pollution and move faster towards renewable energy, all in the context of a quickly-unraveling climate. More specifically, Climate First! will ratchet-up its coal campaign in order to quicken the phase-out of dirty coal in the U.S.

Climate First! extends its sincere thanks to 1) its Board of Directors, which set the direction for the organization in the past year; 2) the many volunteers who continually gave their time and efforts to making Climate First!’s events happen; and 3) the supporters who gave generous financial donations.

## MISCELLANEOUS INFORMATION

### Board of Directors – Dec. 31, 2015

1. Carrie Biggs-Adams (MD)
2. Jean Boucher (VA)
3. James Collins (DE)
4. Ted Conwell, President (MD)
5. Dennis Eshman, Treasurer (VA)
6. Brian Higgins, Vice-President (MD)
7. Gary Rossi (Wash., D.C.)
8. Molly Snyder, Secretary (VA)

### Contact info

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Climate First! is a nonprofit, tax exempt 501 (c)(3) corporation.

Annual Report prepared by Climate First!, Inc.- February 19, 2016.

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