

President Ellen Futter
American Museum of Natural History
Central Park West at 79th Street
New York, NY 10024-5192

September 22nd, 2016

Dear President Futter,

As you may know, dozens of the world's top scientists, including several Nobel laureates, have urged science and natural history museums to demonstrate leadership by cutting all ties to the fossil fuel industry.¹

It is with great respect for the American Museum of Natural History and its work to advance the public's understanding of science and nature, that we stand alongside those scientists, and ask that the AMNH align its investment strategies with its demonstrated commitment to global sustainability.

To date, more than 550 institutions representing over \$3.4 trillion in assets under management have committed to some level of fossil fuel divestment². This includes many of your peer institutions, including the California Academy of Sciences, Australian Academy of Sciences, Phipps Conservatory and Botanical Gardens, and the Field Museum.

These museums offered rationales for divestment that took the perspectives of mission-alignment and risk management. Jonathan Foley, Executive Director of Cal Academy stated, "it seems difficult to reconcile the mission of a public science museum focused on ecology, evolution, and sustainability and the practice of investing in fossil fuels."³ Professor Andrew Holmes, President of the Australian Academy, put the decision in a context of scientists showing leadership within their areas of expertise: "It's a decision that we can make on rational grounds. Is the value that could be derived from fossil fuel activities sustainable in the long term? Certainly not from the view of the Earth system, and probably not financially either."⁴

It is evident that climate change and its myriad impacts on people and the planet are of great concern to the American Museum of Natural History -- your institution has an impressive track

¹ Natural History Museum, 2015. Open Letter to Museums from Members of Scientific Community <http://thenaturalhistorymuseum.org/open-letter-to-museums-from-scientists/>. Accessed September 21, 2016

² 350.org, 2016. Divestment Commitments. Gofossilfree.org <http://gofossilfree.org/commitments/>. Accessed September 21, 2016

³ John Foley, 2015. Divesting from Fossil Fuels at the Cal Academy. The Macroscope <https://the-macroscope.org/divesting-from-fossil-fuels-at-the-cal-academy-f5c0f39a9d3d#.top0refcv>. Accessed September 21, 2016.

⁴ Andrew Holmes, 2015. Australian Academy of Science President: Why We Divested Ourselves of Fossil Fuel Investments. The Conversation. <http://theconversation.com/australian-academy-of-science-president-why-we-divested-ourselves-of-fossil-fuel-investments-49816>. Accessed September 21, 2016

record concerning climate science education and programming. But as far as we know, your endowment is still invested in fossil fuel companies.

Scientists have made it clear that in order to meet the UNFCCC's 2°C benchmark to avoid the most catastrophic impacts of climate change, more than two-thirds of known fossil fuel reserves must be kept in the ground, and absolutely no new fossil fuel infrastructure projects can go forward.⁵ The fossil fuel industry, however, is moving in the opposite direction, spending hundreds of millions a year to look for more coal, oil and gas to burn. Simply put, their businesses are incompatible with a livable planet. An investment in fossil fuels is a bet against a safe climate.

We know the world can move in a new direction. Divestment from fossil fuels is a powerful way to be part of the solution. Divestment creates space for governments to take bolder climate action, helps institutions address the increasing carbon risk present in their portfolios, and provides room for investments that usher in the era of clean and renewable energy. It is the moral thing to do in this time of urgency, as well as an act of fiduciary responsibility.

We are specifically calling on the American Museum of Natural History to:

- 1) Stop any new investments in the top 200 fossil fuel companies.⁶
- 2) Drop coal, oil and gas from your investment portfolio by divesting from the top 200 fossil fuel companies.
- 3) Institute a policy that explicitly rejects donations or sponsorship from those same 200 fossil fuel companies.

We believe the American Alliance of Museums' Code of Ethics for Museums supports a divestment decision. It which states *"it is incumbent on museums to...foster an informed appreciation of the rich and diverse world we have inherited. It is also incumbent upon them to preserve that inheritance for posterity....[Museums] must act not only legally but also ethically."*

As climate change threatens much of what we know and love on this planet, cutting ties to fossil fuel interests is an ethical position. AMNH has an opportunity to help redefine the role of museums in a time of urgent need. Were the American Museum of Natural History to cut ties to fossil fuels, we believe your leadership would not only inspire other museums to follow suit, it would also send a powerful signal to the communities you serve that the AMNH is a leader not just in climate science research and education, but also in championing a safe and sustainable future for all.

⁵ Greg Muttitt, 2016. The Sky's the Limit: Why the Paris Climate Goals Require a Managed Decline of Fossil Fuel Production. <http://priceofoil.org/2016/09/22/the-skys-limit-report/> Accessed September 22, 2016

⁶ See Fossil Free Indexes for listing: <http://fossilfreeindexes.com/research/the-carbon-underground/>

350.org and The Natural History Museum represent more than 800,000 people. As organizations that advocate for action on climate change, our members have expressed a keen interest in the scientists' call for divestment.

We welcome an opportunity to discuss this matter and learn more about your thinking and AMNH's position.

Thank you for your time and attention.

Respectfully,

May Boeve, Executive Director, 350.org

Bill McKibben, Founder and Senior Advisor, 350.org

Beka Economopoulos, Director, The Natural History Museum