

Winter athletes sound climate change alarm



Jeremy Jones of Truckee takes his cause to the White House. Photo/Protect Our Winters

Warning that “winter is in trouble,” 75 Olympic medalists and other winter sports athletes – including White House “Champion of Change” awardee and pro snowboarder Jeremy Jones of Truckee – sent a letter to President Obama urging him to take action on climate and clean energy.

Jones was in Washington on April 11 with other 11 Champions of Change to be honored as “ordinary Americans doing extraordinary things in their communities to out-innovate, out-educate, and out-build the rest of the world.” Obama created the Champions of Change program as part of his Winning the Future initiative.

Jones was being recognized Thursday for his contribution to raising awareness about the impact of climate change on the winter sports industry by creating Protect Our Winters, a foundation established in 2007 to unite and mobilize the global winter sports community against climate change.

“This nomination is an absolute honor for me and the work

we're doing at POW. But it's now my responsibility to take this recognition and help secure a place in the climate discussions in Washington. The letter that's been enthusiastically signed by so many amazing athletes is a strong showing of solidarity from the leaders in snow sports on climate action, so together, we have to keep that momentum going," Jones said in a statement.

The letter to the president references a December 2012 report published by Protect Our Winters and the Natural Resources Defense Council highlighting the economic impact of inconsistent winters on the U.S. snow sports community and tourism-dependent states.

The athletes' letter calls on Obama to follow through on the promise he made in the State of the Union address to fight climate change.

"Mr. President, it's time to force our transition to clean energy, and we need your leadership," the letter states. "...on behalf of 23 million of us who love winter and depend on it for our economic livelihoods, please take the action on climate change you have promised."

Julia Mancuso of Squaw Valley and Hannah Teter of South Lake Tahoe were among those who signed the letter.

"Without a doubt, winter is in trouble," the letter states. "...at risk are the economies of tourist-dependent states where winter tourism generates \$12.2 billion in revenue annually, supports 212,000 jobs and \$7 billion in salaries. Those are the jobs and businesses owned by our friends and families, generators of billions in federal and state income."

– Lake Tahoe News staff report