Life

Bill McKibben emphasizes need for a renewable energy-powered future

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Environmentalist and educator Bill McKibben spoke to the University of Connecticut about the future of renewable energy on Thursday, April 2.

The lecture, titled "Back to the Wall, Face to the Sun: The Climate Crisis and the Renewable Answer," occurred at the Student Union Theater. The seating space was flooded with well over 200 spectators. It was the final lecture of the Edwin Way Teale Lecture Series — talks hosted by UConn's Institute of the Environment and Energy that focus on environmentalism and conservation — for the 2025-2026 school year.

McKibben, known for being the founder of "350.org," an organization devoted to fighting the climate crisis, and "Third Act," an environmentalist organization that mobilizes Americans older than 60 years old, had a lot to say about renewable energy. He began his talk by honoring the work of Edwin Way Teale, a 20th-century American naturalist and the namesake of the Teale Lecture Series. McKibben referred to Teale's books about seasons and emphasized how different these books would be if written about modern weather.

McKibben brought up the changes in seasonal extremes, especially the rising temperatures and reduction in snowfall during winters across the U.S. He said having less snowfall has lowered the water levels of rivers in warmer months and that summers continue to get hotter throughout the country. He also stressed how warmer temperatures melting ice in the Arctic have increased ocean water levels and changed the patterns of their currents, which drive weather throughout the world.

"Climate change is by far the biggest thing that humans have ever done," McKibben said. "And it is now beginning to reach the point where it is doing not just the kind of daily trauma of fire and flood, but now systemic damage to basic systems of the planet."

McKibben said that the current U.S. government and its recent foreign involvement are also problems that connect to climate change and the ability to forge a sustainable future. But he said that renewable energy can be a solution for both the "environment crisis" and the "authoritarianism crisis."

Around five years ago, it became cheaper to use solar and wind energy than fossil fuels, McKibben said. McKibben presented the growing popularity of renewable energy, particularly solar and wind power, as promising for the planet.

"We have an extraordinary opportunity right now, an opportunity to break free from all of that," McKibben said. "If we can continue this rapid, rapid deployment of renewable energy, then the world will be a different place in relatively short [time.]"

McKibben went into the geopolitical state of renewable energy, emphasizing its role throughout the rest of the world. He said China has capitalized off solar energy the most, and went into developments made in the Middle East, Africa, Pakistan and more. He compared these approaches with the U.S. government's current reluctance to invest in renewable energy, which he called "deeply unpatriotic."

As other countries continue to develop solar energy, McKibben said it was the U.S.' job to "not get entirely left behind." He said a decrease in funding from the federal government for renewable energy, along with different rules for renewable energy throughout the country, has made it harder to implement.

McKibben ended the talk by going back to Teale's work and his hope for the future of renewable energy.

After the lecture, McKibben responded to questions from the audience. He said that the most promising forms of energy for the future are solar power, wind power and lithium batteries. He also said that the mining necessary for lithium and the clearing of land needed for solar farms are notable impacts.

Gabby Wincherhern, an eighth-semester ecology and evolutionary biology major and a copy editor and columnist at The Daily Campus, said they enjoyed how McKibben touched on how other countries approach renewable energy.

"When I learned about this kind of stuff in my classes, it's usually focused on Connecticut or America or something like that, but he was talking about like China and like Indonesia, India a lot," Wincherhern said.

Jonathan He, an eighth-semester molecular and cell biology major, said he had similar viewpoints as McKibben, but was not aware of all the examples he presented.

"My opinions were the same as his, it's just he had way more nuance ... with details, information, like real world anecdotes and studies," he said.

More information about the Teale Lecture Series and its past speakers can be found on the Institute of the Environment and Energy website.



Environmentalist and educator Bill McKibben at a protest. McKibben gave a lecture titled "Back to the Wall, Face to the Sun: The Climate Crisis and the Renewable Answer" at the University of Connecticut on Thursday, April 2.
PHOTO COURTESY OF @BILLMCKIBBENVT ON INSTA

MIKE and Earl Sweatshirt take cloud rap detour on double album with SURF GANG

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Earl Sweatshirt, MIKE and SURF GANG pose for a photo. Their joint album, "POMPEII // UTILITY," was released on April 3, 2026.
PHOTOS COURTESY OF @MIKELIKESRAP ON INSTARAM