

McCall Global Warming Focus Group

We are at the edge of a precipice beyond which there is no redemption.
Jim Hansen, NASA Scientist, Director, Goddard Institute for Space Studies

There's nothing we can't do in this community.
Barbara Morgan, NASA astronaut

Question: Can McCall fulfill its share of responsibility for decreasing carbon emissions?

- I. Global heating and climate crisis
- A. Trapped in a planetary greenhouse: rising average global temperatures (over pre-Industrial temperature levels – cumulative)
- _____ +1 F _____ +3.6 F _____ +10 F (runaway heating)
today irrevocable if the world passes the tipping point
- B. Earth is in “imminent peril.” Heating beyond 3.6 F. will cause a “transformed planet” -- Dr. James Hansen et al.
- C. Carbon sources – highest in 650,000 years
1. Carbon lasts 100-500 years in atmosphere
 2. Adding 70 million tons of greenhouse gases into atmosphere a day
 3. Growing by 2% a year
 4. Carbon emissions rising nearly three times faster than they did in 1990s
 5. sources: airplanes, coal plants, automobiles, wood burning, etc.
- D. Feedback loops
1. oceans becoming saturated; acidification; turning into sources of carbon
 2. forests heating and dying, burning; turning into sources of carbon (Amazon turning to savannah)
 3. permafrost melting, emitting methane and carbon
 4. polar ice caps melting – causes more melting because ice deflects heat while water absorbs heat
- E. The “tipping point” – runaway heating out of our control
1. Previously thought to be triggered at 450 ppm
 2. Atmosphere is now at 383 ppm (some reports say 425 ppm)
 3. Tipping point now thought to be 350 ppm – can't linger long without irrevocable, catastrophic climate change
- F. Effects of runaway global warming

In the next few years, this world will experience progressively more ominous and destabilizing changes. These will happen either incrementally – or in sudden, abrupt jumps. Ross Gelbspan, Boiling Point

1. Vanishing Arctic ice – predictions of no summer sea ice revised from 2040

- to 2012; Greenland now at risk; all glaciers of the world melting
- 2. Species – if runaway heating, up to 70% loss – equivalent to mass extinction of 55 million years ago
- 3. severe water shortages – dry reservoirs in the West. Great Lakes already shrinking.
- 4. Coral reefs – bleaching, probably too late to save
- 5. Human disease (i.e. tropical fever now found in Italy, spread by mosquito)
- 6. Fire (i.e. California, Idaho, Greece, Australia)
- 7. Famine and crop loss (i.e. Australia has 30% agricultural loss)
- 8. Sea level rise – 3 to 6 feet by end of century (irrevocable now)
- 9. Flooding and torrential rains, landslides
- 10. Hurricanes and tornadoes
- 11. Killer heat waves - 35,000 people died in Europe in 2005
- 12. Massive human migration (50 million by 2010)
- 13. Collapsing economic and political infrastructures -- chaos

“If we go on emitting greenhouse gases at anything like the current rate, most of the surface of the globe will be rendered uninhabitable within the lifetimes of most readers of this article.” Mark Lynas, author of High Tide

G. Denial

- 1. Denial is a coping mechanism in face of something too painful to confront. *Anyone still in denial over global warming probably wants to be in denial.* People who are still in denial will not be productive in this crisis. Leave them aside. Focus energy on motivating the “can-do” people.
- 2. Distraction is a form of denial and an equally harmful manifestation of nonproductive behavior (because it allows the actor to leave the problem unaddressed); however, the distracted citizens may find focus *if* they are personally confronted.
- 3. Parents are the largest social category of people in denial over global warming – soccer culture exacerbates the crisis through distraction.
- 4. Role of “victory speakers” – WWII model of trusted citizens in the community speaking out about the nature of the threat and what people can do.

II. The Targets for Climate Stabilization at 2 C. / 450 ppm – Union of Concerned Scientists

- A. Arrest rising emissions by 2010
- B. Bring down emissions 4% each year thereafter
- C. Achieve 80% reduction by 2050 (some reports say reduce to zero emissions)

III. Role of government

- A. Government is trustee of resources with *duty* to protect atmosphere
- B. Each government has proportionate liability for reducing carbon to achieve target
- C. Orphan shares are inexcusable because they will sink all other efforts; citizens must hold “deadbeat sovereigns” accountable
- D. *Every jurisdiction* in the U.S. must achieve targets in order to avoid orphan shares

- E. Government must also focus on adaptation: saving as many natural resources, and lives, as possible.

IV. Role of citizens

- A. Climate crisis will not solve itself. Take initiative. Commit time, energy, resources, community. Focus on basic needs, not luxuries.
- B. Force your officials to take responsibility for the orphan share of your community.
 - 1. Goal: cap emissions by 2010 or earlier and reduce 4% annually thereafter (two steps: commit to goal, then implement)
Advice from leading climate policy thinkers: Time is not on our side. To achieve the cap, target the low-hanging fruit first -- the measures that are easy to implement. Use time wisely to plan infrastructure changes. Avoid burdensome processes that consume too much time. Bear in mind the perils of progressive policy. A rescue rope that is too short is no good at all. Focus on the big picture. Examples of community initiatives:
 - a. moratoriums on land development, deforestation, airport and road expansion, new wood stoves, new emissions sources
 - b. reduce recreational vehicle use by certain percentage each year – coordinating with other jurisdictions
 - c. no idling law
 - d. ban styrofoam and plastic bags/ bottled water regulations
 - e. local food movement
 - f. reorganize sports and school activities to reduce driving
 - g. parking disincentives for SUVs/ vehicle emissions requirements
 - h. public transportation projects, carbon tax
 - i. increased recycling/composting
 - j. green building requirements and tax incentives for solar retrofits
 - k. education, education, education
 - 2. Procedural tools and resources
 - a. Mayor's Climate Agreement 779 cities have signed (including 6 in Idaho: Bellevue, Pocatello, Hailey, Sandpoint, Boise, Sun Valley) -- <http://www.usmayors.org/climateprotection/>
 - b. Cool cities program <http://coolcities.us/>
 - c. Focus the Nation– Jan. 31 <http://www.focusthenation.org/actionmap/> -
 - d. Union of Concerned Scientists http://www.ucsusa.org/global_warming/
 - e. Climate Crisis Coalition newsfeed www.climatecrisiscoalition.org

Follow up – don't lose focus. Take initiative. Business as usual has set us all on a deadly course. We are in a different world now, alive during the most important time on Earth. Every individual is either part of the problem or part of the solution.

There is no body of expertise – not authoritative answers – for this one. We are crossing a threshold into uncharted territory. And since there is no precedent to guide us, we are left with only our own hearts to consult, whatever courage we can muster, our instinctive dedication to a human future – and the intellectual integrity to look reality in the eye.” Ross Gelbspan, Beyond the Point of No Return, Dec. 11, 2007