

CLIMATE TALK

Mark Peterson

I'm always a bit astounded and perplexed by those who quickly dismiss the issue of global climate change. While they eagerly desire the best available science on which to make serious and personal health decisions, such as having an organ transplant or undergoing life-threatening surgery for them or their loved ones, they quickly dismiss overwhelming scientific consensus that the planet is rapidly warming from largely human-caused burning of fossil fuels. I wonder what scientists they are listening to?

On Nov. 2 the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change released its fifth report. There is no longer a debate in the scientific community about the cause of escalating land and sea temperatures. The IPCC chairman declared: *"We have little time before the window of opportunity to stay within the 2 degrees centigrade of warming closes. ... Our emissions should drop by 40 to 70 percent globally between 2010 and 2050, and falling to zero or below by 2100."* The IPCC report warns: *"Continued emission of greenhouse gases will cause further warming and long-lasting changes in all components of the climate system, increasing the likelihood of severe, pervasive and irreversible impacts for people and ecosystems."*

As much as we'd all prefer the issue of climate change to go away, it might very well be the global issue of our times. If anything, the conversation will likely grow more intense this year. Consider:

- In June Pope Francis, the spiritual leader of over a billion people, is expected to issue an encyclical addressing climate change. Those in the know expect that the encyclical will clearly link human dignity to the way we care for the environment around us, affirming a moral imperative to care for that environment.
- In December, the nations of the world will meet in Paris to seek a global agreement for the future reduction of carbon emissions, which will be critically important if we hope to successfully address the grave risks that climate change presents.
- In between those months, climate change will be in the news as we likely hear more about the Obama Administration's efforts to curb carbon dioxide emissions using the Clean Air Act and politicians debate and posture on whether, and how, to address an issue that has tremendous implications for all aspects of each of our lives -- our economy, national security, future generations and much more.

To further a public dialogue on climate change during this critical time, the Chequamegon Chapter of Citizens' Climate Lobby (with over 120 local members from Ashland, Washburn, Bayfield and the surrounding area) will be presenting a regular column, "**Climate Talk**" in the Daily Press, with local to international considerations pertaining to the issue. CCL is a non-profit, non-partisan, grassroots advocacy organization, with over 220 local chapters nationally, focused on national policies to address climate change. Its members respect all viewpoints, even those who would disagree with them.

Toward the goal of public engagement on this issue, the Sigurd Olson Environmental Institute of Northland College is presenting a series this spring entitled, "Climate Change: Global Problem, Local

Solutions.” It is designed to highlight local and state initiatives being taken by business, organizations and individuals to address this issue. The series is as follows:

Tuesday, March 10 – 7:30 pm

“Xcel Energy’s Proposed Response to Carbon Management Regulations”

- David Donovan, General Manager, Customer and Community Service, Xcel Energy

“EPA’s Carbon Pollution Standards: An Opportunity for Collaboration in Wisconsin”

- Keith Reopelle, Senior Policy Director, Clean Wisconsin

Tuesday, April 14 – 7:00 pm

“Local Climate Change Research in and around the Chequamegon Bay”

- Dr. Randy Lehr, Bro Professor of Sustainable Regional Development
- Dr. Luke Van Roekel, Assistant Professor of Atmospheric Science
- Dr. Toben Lafrancois, Adjunct Assistant Professor of Natural Resources and Philosophy

Tuesday, April 28 – 7:00 pm

“Solar Power for Northern Wisconsin”

- Tyler Huebner, Executive Director, Renew Wisconsin

Saturday, May 9 – 3:00 pm – 5:30 pm | Bailey’s Greenhouse, Washburn

“Field Tour: What Chequamegon Bay Residents are doing to Address Climate Change in Their Homes and Businesses”

- Bill Bailey, Bailey’s Greenhouse, Home and Business Tour, Washburn
- Bayfield Electric Cooperative (invited) and local practitioners of wind, solar, geothermal and biomass energy

Tuesday, May 12 – 7:00 pm

“Northland College’s Carbon Neutral Energy Future”

- Willa Kuh, Director of Planning, Affiliated Engineers, Inc.

I hope to see many of you there. In the meantime, I encourage you to present your views on this issue to this paper and we’ll continue the public conversation of “Climate Talk” in future columns of the Daily Press.

Mark Peterson is the Executive Director of the Sigurd Olson Environmental Institute at Northland College and a member of the Chequamegon Chapter of Citizens’ Climate Lobby

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