

Climate Change Solutions

Written by Jeff Smith, State Senator District 31
Wednesday, 17 March 2021 10:23

<http://newiproggressive.com/images/stories/S5/frac-sand-spill-ap-s5.jpg>



Sen. Smith writes about the policies developed by the Governor's Task Force on Climate Change included in the budget, such as innovative flood mitigation strategies and proposals to help our farmers.

MADISON - We're all familiar with Isaac Newton's well-known law of physics that every action has an equal and opposite reaction. Although specific to the science of physics, we can still apply the law's same concept to many other aspects of our lives. We know our daily actions impact others. One person's bad behavior has repercussions that can affect many others.

Climate change is a perfect example of Newton's law playing out. Extreme weather events – caused by climate change – are a result of irresponsible decisions made by wealthy fossil fuel energy corporations. Today, these weather events are causing farmers to lose their livelihoods, displacing families from their homes and posing greater risks to all Wisconsinites' health and public safety.

Despite the problems caused by some bad actors, I believe there are more citizens motivated to react to the climate change crisis and be a part of a solution to make our communities cleaner and safer. Following the logic of Newton's law, we know the environmental sustainability efforts we take today will have far-reaching benefits for generations to come.

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As a member of the Governor's Climate Change Task Force, I'm proud to see the initiatives developed by the Task Force and included in Governor Tony Evers' budget to respond to the climate crisis. We must act immediately and make the bold investments necessary to build more resilient communities. It's our responsibility to ensure our state is livable for our children and grandchildren.

Governor Tony Evers established the Climate Change Task Force because he understands the importance of taking action on the climate crisis. Like so many other Wisconsinites, he knows that ignoring the problem will only make matters worse.

The Climate Change Task Force released the Task Force Report in December 2020. Task Force members developed the report after months of public hearings with a diverse group of stakeholders. The report includes fifty-five climate action solutions across nine different sectors, including agriculture, transportation, energy and education.

Governor Evers doubled down on his commitment to address the climate crisis by including thirty-five solutions from the Task Force report in his 2021-23 budget. His budget makes critical investments to mitigate the effects of climate change while also strengthening our rural communities.



The Governor includes numerous policies in his budget aimed at preventing more extreme floods, which have become a growing problem here in western Wisconsin. He proposed creating a flood resilience plan, which would help restore historical wetlands in flood zones and regulate development on existing wetlands. Governor Evers' budget invests more than \$30 million to help build more resilient roads and infrastructure to prevent flooding disasters. The budget also includes an innovative first-of-its-kind program to help Wisconsinites purchase flood insurance.

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Floods and other natural disasters caused by climate change have made it a lot harder for farmers to run their businesses. The Governor's budget will help protect farmers from extreme weather events and give farmers tools to be a part of the solution. The budget establishes several grant programs to make it easier for farmers to transition to more environmentally sustainable agricultural practices. The Value-Added Agricultural Grant Program, specifically, provides education and technical assistance to produce value-added agricultural products, such as organic farming and best grazing practices.

The Task Force Report includes policies grounded in climate justice and equity. Climate change disproportionately impacts low-income families and communities of color. Governor Evers' budget creates the Office of Environmental Justice to help design climate policies that reduce emissions and pollutants that typically target these marginalized groups. The budget also establishes a technical assistance grant program to assist municipalities and tribal nations in developing a plan to be carbon-free by 2050.

Despite the irresponsible mistakes of some bad actors, we have opportunities right here in Governor Evers' budget to begin responding to the climate crisis. Our children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren are depending on us to act ambitiously today. The steps we take now will ensure they have a safer and healthier world to live in.

This is the second column in a two-part series about the climate change impact in Wisconsin.