

Bold Plans Needed to Save Our Planet

Written by Jan Koch, Shawano

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Climate change is real and increasingly a part of our daily lives. Change won't take place overnight, but some common-sense steps can be taken immediately.

SHAWANO, WI - God created a world in which everything was in perfect harmony. The land and its plants and animals were a part of an ecosystem that worked beautifully. Man should be able to enjoy all creation for eternity but unfortunately future generations won't have that opportunity if we continue on our present path.

Climate change is real and increasingly a part of our daily lives. There is evidence, facts, and science to tell us that.

Western Wisconsin has experienced yearly flooding in areas where such phenomena had only occurred every hundred years. Fiercer tornadoes and hurricanes can be seen across the country. Longer droughts out west are causing dangerous fire conditions. Warming temperatures have disrupted wildlife migration, produced toxic algae blooms, and contributed to the dirtying of our Great Lakes.

Even Pope Francis believes that climate change is a moral issue that must be addressed now in order to protect the earth and all that inhabit it. In 2015 he wrote a 192 page encyclical urging the world to take action on this ecology crisis.

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According to a February study, there's a 99.9999% chance that humans are the cause of global warming. Humans burn fossil fuels such as oil, coal and gas, which release carbon dioxide (CO₂), methane and other gases into the Earth's atmosphere and oceans. CO₂ is the greenhouse gas that's most responsible for warming. If the amount of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere isn't lowered, temperatures will continue to increase.

If we want a habitable planet, we have to confront the problem at its source. This means we have to reduce the use of coal, oil and gas by mid-century.

The United Nations' Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change found that capping global warming at 1.5 degrees Celsius could avoid catastrophic consequences. However, a recent analysis by Carbon Tracker found that 92 percent of companies are working toward growth in fossil fuel production and/or reserves.

Can the fossil fuel industry be trusted to act in the best interest of our planet? Absolutely not.

We can't believe fossil fuel companies when they appear to care about the planet. Their industry lobbyists have spent years pretending to support the Paris Agreement's goals. Since the 2015 Paris Agreement, Exxon Mobil, Royal Dutch Shell, Chevron, BP and Total have spent \$1 billion collectively on greening up their image. However, they'll only invest 3 percent of their \$115 billion on low-carbon technologies like carbon capture and algae bio fuels.

Conservative Republicans continue to deny that there is a problem. They profess that oil, gas and coal are all good sources of energy and oil drilling should be increased. They won't support expanding wind and solar sources. They would rather support private ownership of gas and electric industries.

Former Governor Walker ordered the term "climate change" to be struck from government documents. President Trump also attacks climate science. He refused to sign an agreement

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protecting the rapidly melting Arctic region unless any references to climate change were removed.

Political will to turn off the fossil fuel taps won't take place overnight. But some common-sense steps could be taken immediately. The yearly \$20.5 billion state and federal subsidies could be eliminated. There could be a ban on new leases for oil and gas development on America's public lands. Reckless new drilling could be stopped by reinstating the crude oil export ban.

When you hear the words "New Deal" you may recall an economic measure that was introduced by President Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1933 to counteract the effects of those who were suffering from the Great Depression. It involved a massive public works program which brought about immediate economic relief, as well as reforms in industry, agriculture, finance, water power, labor and housing.

Drastic measures are necessary at this point in time. Legislation called the "Green New Deal" has been introduced in Congress. Just like the first "New Deal", heavy investment by the federal government in green manufacturing could bring about a long period of widely shared economic growth. Profound changes to transportation, housing, energy, agriculture, forestry and more could avert climate breakdown.

This new deal is counter to the current system in which corporations produce huge profits from fossil fuels. However, it could return power generation to local or community control. It could bring needed jobs and investment to communities which have been ravaged by fossil-fueled power.

Governor Tony Evers recently showed his determination to address climate change by committing the state to use 100 percent carbon neutral energy by 2050. His order includes the creation of the Office of Sustainability, which Republicans had stripped from his budget.

This is our planet. Future generations are counting on us to preserve it. Only bold plans will reverse the global warming that is destroying God's creation.

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