

OPINIONS

Global warming, climate change, and politics

BY ALAN VOETSCH

Due to length limits, I've not been able to address a couple of items in previous articles. I will attempt to do so now.

I had a comment or two earlier in the year suggesting that politics has nothing to do with climate change and AGW (anthropogenic global warming). Sadly, it has *everything* to do with it. There were ads by folks running for local Medford office in the last election with one politician-to-be claiming to have the desire to tackle climate change. When politicians talk like that, it means one thing and one thing only: another excuse to *raise taxes, create new taxes, and increase regulations*. This person believes that by passing resolutions to increase or create a tax and/or make it harder for businesses to compete, they've helped save the planet. Hogwash. All they accomplish is to increase revenue so they have more power and tax dollars to spend stupidly. I actually emailed the candidate in question with a couple of research suggestions but got no response.

I can tell you one thing: that particular candidate knows diddly-squat about the natural forces involved with climate change. When voting for those who represent the Applegate Valley in Salem or Washington DC, please make sure the candidate has more than a political understanding of the subject matter.

One comment suggested that policies to address these issues should only be talked about and dealt with by climate scientists. In other words, they do not want you or me (or our elected representatives) to question what they say, only to shut up, listen, fork over more hard-earned dollars, and blindly obey. The truth is that most of those folks receive government funding for their alarming studies only if they produce results that the government wants. And seeing as how almost every single government department and branch office has its own embedded radical environmentalists, the drive to continue the funding supply through grants simply increases the job security of those individuals. It's self-preservation.

Radicals also stack town hall meetings of our elected representatives. Instead of attending as individuals, they attend as organized groups. One group (and there

are several activist groups in the Rogue Valley) brings dozens of members to take numbers. The folks with numbers are randomly drawn to have their questions/comments heard. The goal is to badger the official with question after question about their niche issue. I attended a town hall by US Senator Ron Wyden in Medford several years ago and witnessed this myself. It was hard to get any land use, property tax, or Veteran's affairs questions heard because organized radicals steal all the attention of our elected officials and focus it on their issue. Climate change seldom polls in the top ten of voter priorities.

Restricting the use of fossil fuels is a bad idea because their use is the quickest, surest way to decrease poverty and increase human flourishing globally. More than a billion people don't have access to regular supplies of electricity today. Millions die prematurely from a lack of safe drinking water, modern transportation, and hospitals with continuously working electric lights, medical equipment, and refrigeration. Radicals want that to continue because their basic premise is antihuman.

In the West, we take these necessities for granted, but they were all brought about on a large scale by the use of fossil fuels. Where coal, natural gas, and oil are in regular use, people are wealthy, and where their use is absent, poverty, disease, and hunger are rife. As a result, a carbon dioxide tax is a tax on freedom and prosperity.

To those who "believe" that the iconic hockey-stick graph of Michael Mann was based on actual real-world facts, it wasn't. The media made the stick famous because they love a good, scary tale. When the stick was later torn to pieces due to faulty scientific input, there was little media coverage. The sad truth is that when there is a scary story involved it becomes magazine cover material even when it is fiction. Brian Sussman's book, *Climategate*, (among others) presents the email train of deceit. When your research erases the well-known Medieval Warm Period and the Little Ice Age to prove a scientific "consensus," you skate on very thin ice.

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Realizing just how much the fire district does for us

BY SANDY AND DON SHAFFER

A lightning strike sparked a wildfire in our immediate neighborhood less than two years after my husband and I retired to the Applegate. As a result of that fire, I quickly "unretired" to help the Applegate Partnership develop a "Community Fire Plan" for the Applegate Valley and its residents.

A lot of local, state, and federal partners helped with the Applegate Fire Plan, but the first to step up with support was our local Applegate Valley Rural Fire Protection District. Applegate fire district

staff assisted me in securing grants so that residents had financial assistance to get thinning and cleanup work completed around their homes. The fire district's personnel performed home assessments with residents so that lessons were learned along the way. In addition, they have continued over the past 18 years to help new residents keep their homes and property more fire-safe.

Some might assume or suggest that our Applegate Valley Fire District's primary duty is to respond to medical

The message from a warming Applegate

BY ALAN JOURNET

As residents of the Applegate Valley, we can ignore the data and our own eyes as some argue we should. Alternatively, we can be a little smarter; we can acknowledge what is happening and then both prepare for the future and commit to reducing the problem.

I'm an Applegate Valley newcomer of some seven years and a local forest owner, but I can see the same trends that others must see: our Douglas firs are dying at an alarming rate. Though great for our winter wood store, it's a disturbing harbinger of what is likely to come. Exactly how the warming trend will influence our native tree species is unclear, but analyses suggest that several commercially and ecologically important species will soon be seriously compromised (charcoal.cnre.vt.edu/climate/species).

But temperature isn't the only factor.

We know that mountain snowpack stores substantial quantities of water. When snow melts, it serves our aquatic systems (salmon, etc.) and our agricultural irrigation and municipal and industrial water needs. Philip Mote, director of Oregon's Climate Change Research Institute (OCCRI), along with OCCRI coauthors, reports in 2018 *Nature Climate and Atmospheric Science* that mountain snowpack throughout the west is declining at over 90 percent of monitoring sites. Meanwhile, Howat and Tulaczyk reported (2005 *Annals of Glaciology*) similar trends in April snow-water equivalent below 7,500 feet for the Northern California Siskiyou, which feed the Applegate Valley. With warming winters, the dates of snowmelt and peak river flow are happening earlier, while summer and fall river flows dwindle. Unsurprisingly, summer and fall soil moisture is similarly declining (www2.usgs.gov/climate_landuse/clu_rd/nccv/viewer.asp), a particularly troubling trend that increases wildfire risk.

Anyone engaged in agriculture in the Applegate Valley should be aware of these trends and prepare for future warming—with associated decreases in water availability—by switching to crops that are more heat- and drought-tolerant and by adjusting irrigation methods to those that lower water use, such as drip technology.

An example of the agricultural significance of climate trends is grape varietal sensitivity. Several years ago, Greg Jones, a world-renowned wine terroir expert and former Southern Oregon University professor, reported

(2006 *Geological Association of Canada Symposium*) on the temperature optimum for grape varietals grown in the Willamette Valley—data that are equally relevant to the Applegate Valley. Comparing his data with temperature trends and projections reveals that the temperature is increasing above the optimum for the historically valuable pinot gris varietal. Fortunately, many local vintners are already cultivating varietals such as pinot noir, chardonnay, sauvignon blanc, tempranillo, merlot, malbec, cabernet sauvignon, grenache, and zinfandel, all of which are adapted to warmer growing seasons.

Global temperature data tell us that we are on a warming trajectory that is equivalent to that identified as the worst-case scenario in general circulation models. Although claims from those rejecting the consensus science falsely argue that climate models exaggerate the severity of our probable future, example after example reveals that actual trends are either more extreme or in the "most extreme" range suggested by model projections.

These trends are expected to continue and worsen unless we collectively reduce our climate-polluting gas emissions. Arguing that nothing much is happening defies our own senses and denies the abundant science demonstrating these trends and explaining the reason for them. Fostering the delusion that nothing much is happening will never lead to a solution—it will just lead to further chaos and suffering.

While we can prepare for the future if we accept the data and their explanations, we will not adapt if we simply reject the data and deny the science. We can also take personal steps to reduce our emissions. But, probably more importantly, we can examine where candidates seeking election stand on climate science. While we cannot influence what happens in other nations, or even other states, we can influence what happens in Oregon and our region. We can cast our ballots only for candidates who clearly accept the science and commit to encouraging appropriate action by the body to which they seek election. This means we'd be wise to favorably consider local candidates who promise to foster preparation for future climatic conditions and also support action to reduce emissions statewide and remove greenhouse gases from the atmosphere.

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and rescue calls, structure and wildland fires, and motor vehicle and other accidents. That's only part of it. They are our "first responders" out here in our rural valley. They will rescue boaters and hang gliders, as well as your cat on the roof. And they are here for us as we age, needing a "public assist" after falling on a slippery floor.

Applegate Valley Fire District accomplishes all of this by using the highest levels of professional education and training programs available, with equipment tailored to our fire district's narrow and sometimes steep roads.

Seven staff work side-by-side with our fire district's many volunteers to develop a strong, dedicated team of firefighters. Who just happen to be our neighbors...

Our Applegate Valley Fire District is definitely a valued community resource, and we support them in all of their endeavors!

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HAPPY HALLOWEEN