

Greenhouse Network Training

By Craig Lubow

ExCom Member Craig Lubow attended a global warming conference with workshops offered by the Greenhouse Network. The conference was held last June at the Cal-Wood Educational Center near Jamestown, Colorado. The training focused on the science of global warming and ways to stop new construction or expansion of coal plants. The Conference organizers were Eban Goodstein and Leslie Glustrom. Eban is a professor at the Lewis and Clark College in Oregon, with a specialty in environmental economics. Leslie is from Boulder, where she has been fighting to stop coal plants in Colorado, with some successes. Leslie often states “there is a great big fusion plant in the sky.” She advocates the use of solar energy as one part of the solution. The other speakers focused on conservation, wind energy, and population as other parts of the solution.

Alison Burchell spoke about the task of grassroots organizing. The grassroots organizing requires mobilization of students to carry on the fight in the long term. Student organizing was the topic addressed by Billy Parrish. Eban is currently coordinating “Focus the Nation,” an effort to organize the environmental movement on college campuses across the entire nation. You may visit the website at www.focusthenation.org.

Roger Clark from the Grand Canyon Trust spoke about his success at stopping coal plants at some Tribal reservations. Other activists from some tribes also spoke. There were some tribes that entered into agreements permitting some Colorado utilities to construct coal plants on the reservations, but the environmental activists successfully stopped the coal plants.

The scientific process of global warming was examined by Dr. Martin Hoerling from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), which produced the National Academy Report entitled, “Understanding and Responding to Climate Change.” Evidence of global warming includes

- (1) Heat wave of 2003;
- (2) Hurricanes of 2005;
- (3) Argentina’s vanishing Upsala Glacier;
- (4) Accelerated rate of rising sea level;
- (5) Six of the seven warmest years have occurred in the 21st century and each new peak is warmer than the previous peak;
- (6) Ice melting in the arctic regions, including polar bear habitat; and
- (7) Warmer ocean temperatures.

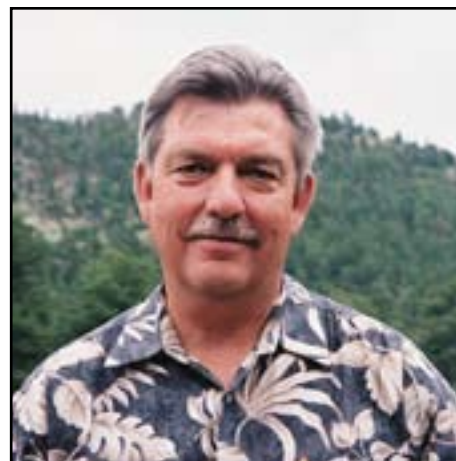
Although it is impossible to prove that greenhouse emissions are the sole cause of global warming the resulting weather events mentioned above, all of these factors are highly correlated with the increases in global greenhouse gases. The significant correlation from the past 200 years make it extremely probable



Hunter Lovins gives presentation



Billy Parrish and Eban Goodstein



Roger Clark

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that the greenhouse gases contribute significantly to global warming, beyond what would occur in natural cycles. Carbon dioxide is the most significant component of greenhouse gases, with methane the second greatest component of the gases.

It is predicted that the earth's atmosphere will continue to rise as much as six to ten degrees by 2085. Regardless of any efforts to reduce GHG emissions, the atmosphere is still expected to rise by a minimum of two degrees. The more significant warming is predicted to occur if we fail to reduce the emissions substantially. If the permafrost melts, it is expected that there would be an explosion of methane gas emissions, which would further contribute to global warming.

In the year 2000, the United States was the largest emitter of carbon dioxide, accounting for 25 percent of the global emissions. In the meantime, China's emissions are growing at an alarming rate, possibly passing the United States before the year 2025. Global carbon dioxide is increasing at the rate of nearly two percent per year. Coal plants and automobiles are the most significant contributors to carbon dioxide.

Hunter Lovins spoke about the Kyoto treaty and what we can do to reduce GHG emissions. She cited examples of projects throughout the world in which other cities are making progress. Building design and building codes can reduce our demand for energy significantly.

Alternative energy sources can meet much of the remaining demand after the reductions achieved by conservation. Cars can be more efficient, burning less fuel. Designing communities to reduce urban sprawl can reduce energy demand and energy demand can be further reduced by implementing mass transit, including light rail and commuter rail. One city in Brazil, larger than Kansas City, implemented a system based on rapid bus transit, which operated much like a subway system.

Carbon sequestration is a natural process in which some carbon is absorbed by into the oceans and vegetation. However, our carbon emissions are far higher than what can be naturally sequestered. Some utilities talk about other "sequestration" methods. However, those methods are not really sequestration. Rather, the alternative methods are really storage of carbon emissions. Stored carbon often leaks back into the atmosphere.

There are many ways in which individual consumers can consume less. Let's start with the home. Consumers can insulate their homes better, install the most efficient water heaters, incorporate solar heating and cooling

into new home construction, install slow flowing faucets, purchase newer and more efficient refrigerators, and purchase efficient front loading washing ma-

chines. Next to the loss of warm and cool air in poorly insulated homes, the next largest use of excessive energy are the older hot water tanks. If you are unable to replace your hot water tank with an efficient modern tank, you can wrap the hot water tank with an insulating blanket at a very nominal cost, which will save you money on you gas bills too. All of this can be accomplished without any change in your daily lifestyle. Just think of what you could contribute if you are willing to make a few minor sacrifices in your lifestyle.

Next to the burning of coal and other fossil fuels for electricity, the next greatest contributor of emissions is burning of oil in automobiles. The refinery process also contributes to other forms of air contamination. Driving a smaller high mileage will significantly reduce your personal contribution to emissions. Riding mass transit, where available, will also help to reduce your contribution.

The attendees at the conference were treated to a delightful evening of entertainment. Sharon Abreu and Michael Hurwicz sang environmental and social justice songs, as well as played the instruments. Sharon and Michael have performed at events around the country and Europe and performed at the United Nations.

As a result of this training, Craig Lubow will be speaking to groups periodically, giving a presentation on global warming. If you know of any churches, schools, or civic groups that would like to hear more about global warming during the coming year, please contact Elaine Giessel (Kansas Chapter Education Chair) at 913-888-8517 or Elaine.Giessel@kansas.sierraclub.org.



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