



The Sequoia

Becoming A Climate Activist

Betty Chase

INSIDE
TALKING ABOUT
CLIMATE CHANGE
LOCAL CONSERVATION
NEWS & UPDATES

Our Sierra Club Group Climate Action Committee

Climate change is here, bringing heat, drought, wildfires and smoke to our Mother Lode towns, and extreme weather across the planet. We believe that the best way to address climate anxiety is to talk solutions, inspire one another, and get connected with a climate action community. This newsletter is just one step in this journey, and we'd like to hear from you. Email us at tsclimateaction@gmail.com. Together we can make a difference.

CLIMATE CHANGE is an all-hands-on-deck emergency, but it's easy to get paralyzed. We know that switching to paper straws and recycling plastic bottles can't solve the climate crisis. We need to do more – but what can we do?

Check your carbon footprint.

Our individual choices matter, and the first step is to see which choices make the most difference. Carbon footprint calculators are a great place to start.

I tried several of them, and my emissions came out close to the average American: 18 tons of carbon emissions in a single year. Gulp. (I'm installing solar this summer.)

A fine calculator to try is the free **Earth Hero app** that you can download to your mobile phone. You can get a quick estimate; or you can create an account and refine your numbers. The app will identify specific actions you can take to reduce personal emissions. Actions are ranked, sorted, and tie directly back into the emissions calculations.

Make climate-safe personal choices.

Countless changes have been proposed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and we need to do them all. Drive less, eat less meat, buy energy efficient appliances, change lightbulbs, and much more.

- **For inspiration**, check out everyone's favorite climate scientist at www.katharinehayhoe.com and her YouTube series at www.globalweirdingseries.com.
- **For hundreds of ideas**, head to www.projectdrawdown.org.
- **Join an eco-challenge** with like-minded people: www.ecochallenge.org.

Amplify your voice and advocate for systemic change.

Individual actions, however, can never match the power of collective actions. In fact, individual choices only account for 40% of carbon emissions. We need federal policies to promote clean energy and phase out coal and other fossil fuels.

- **Join Citizen's Climate Lobby**, a non-partisan organization fighting to reduce America's emissions by putting a price on carbon. This well-organized group has 200,000 international members with chapters covering every congressional district in the US. Take their terrific online training to learn more: www.citizensclimatelobby.org.
- **Become a Climate Reality Leader** with former US Vice President Al Gore and a team of remarkable thought leaders. Training is free, it's hosted online, and the next session starts in October 2021: www.climateact.org.
- **It's a leadership issue.** Call and write your representatives and work for candidates based on their environmental policies. **Then vote!**

Share your stories.

We all need inspiration and would love to hear your ideas, what you are doing and what efforts you're starting.

Send an email to: tsclimateaction@gmail.com with your ideas, actions, and groups. Together, we can make a difference and the Climate Action Committee can help coordinate our efforts. ■



Why We Need to talk (and talk and talk) About Climate Change.

Sierra Tuolumne Group Climate Committee

One immediate thing we can all do about climate change right now is to talk about it. Yes, just talk about it. More than 7 in 10 Americans believe climate change is happening, 6 in 10 are worried about it, but just two-thirds of Americans rarely, if ever, talk about climate change with the people they care about.



For an extended version of this article, with links to great resources for information on climate change, click the climate action link on our website: www.sierratuolumne.org.

WE NEED TO TALK about climate change. You probably don't need convincing that climate change is real and a crisis. Heat-waves—the number one weather-related killer in the U.S.—are more frequent and intense, droughts are longer, fire seasons are more severe, storms are more intense, there is less ice and snow cover, sea level is rising, and oceans are acidifying. All this is happening now, not in some distant future, and it's hurting most those who did the least to cause it—the poor and marginalized here and around the world.

Many people get it. The problem is urgent. But they don't know what to do about it. Climate change can seem too big to tackle or too depressing to think about. Others feel they have no control over what politicians and big organizations do. Some think that nothing we do at this point matters because the planet is already locked into a hellish future.

The good news is that scientists believe that if we stop emitting carbon, temperatures should stabilize fairly quickly. And there are things we all can do to limit climate change – both in pushing for change at a policy level and acting at an individual level.

So what can you do? We, the Climate Action Committee of the Tuolumne Group of the Sierra Club, will be publishing a series of articles, here and in future emails and newsletters, about what we can all do right here and now, in the Motherlode, to help tackle the climate crisis. We are going to talk about climate change solutions, and how you can be a part of them. We hope to inspire you to act and to feel connected to a committed, growing community that cares.

Start talking!

One thing you can do about climate change right now is to talk about it. Yes, just talk about it. It turns out that more than 7 in 10 Americans believe climate change is happening, 6 in 10 are worried about it, but two-thirds of Americans rarely, if ever, talk about climate change with the people they care about. Surveys show that only about 35% of Americans discuss global warming at least occasionally, and only 25% hear about it in the media once a week.

So if most of us are worried about climate, why aren't we talking about it more? Typically, it's because we feel we "don't know enough," "don't want to talk about scary things," "it won't make a difference," or we "don't want to cause an argument."

That is a problem. We humans are highly social. Researchers have found that people tend to believe what those around them believe. Talking about climate change signals to our friends and neighbors that climate change is real and is a priority. Once they see that climate is important enough for you to talk about and act on, it's easier for them to believe it is real, talk about it with others, and act on it themselves, even when you are not around. This helps spread awareness and raise concern to the society-wide levels that attract the attention of policymakers and the media.

There is lots of evidence that social behavior is contagious. For example, one of the best predictors of whether people will install solar panels isn't age, race, income, or political affiliation, but whether their neighbors have solar. Another study found that half of respondents who knew someone who gave up flying because of climate change said that they fly less because of that example. Those influenced by a "non-flyer" explained that the bold position to give up flying had: conveyed the seriousness of climate change and flying's contribution to it; crystallized the link between values and actions; and even reduced feelings of isolation that flying less was a valid and sensible response to climate change. This kind of contagious talking and acting on climate change is necessary to make change happen on a large scale.



You're ready, but what do you say?

The most important thing is to start by talking about why it matters to you. This could be a personal story about how climate change affects you or those you love, or an appeal to shared values or things you have in common with someone, such as parenthood, faith, etc., and why that should lead to caring about a changing climate. This also means listening, so you know what the other person cares about and how you can connect with them.

Talking about the underlying science of what causes climate change is generally unnecessary since around two thirds of the US public already believe in climate change or worry about it. The challenge, then is usually not awareness, but inspiring people to act.

Start with undisputed facts.

When talking with someone who is unaware or unsure, you don't need tons of data. You can communicate the science of climate change with some undisputed facts.

- 1. The physics of climate change have been understood for 150 years: carbon dioxide released by burning fossil fuels trap heat in the atmosphere, heating up the earth.**
- 2. Since we began burning fossil fuels, carbon dioxide levels have increased far beyond any level in the last 800,000 years, and global average temperatures have already increased by 1°C, an increase that leads to a dramatic rise in the number of extremely hot days.**
- 3. We need to make big changes right now to keep temperature rises below dangerous levels.**

Create urgency by talking about what's already happening.

Climate change isn't some awful possibility that might occur in the distant future. It's here already. For example, the seven warmest years in the 1880–2020 record have all occurred since 2014, while the ten warmest years have occurred since 2005. Extreme weather such as heatwaves, droughts and heavy rainfall are increasing

in frequency due to climate change. Here in California, wildfires have increased in size by eight times and the number of acres burned has increased by 500% since 1970.

Make climate projections personal and concrete.

Climate projections are typically stated in averages, which mask the variability in impacts. For example, if we carry on emitting as we are now, in the Motherlode, we can expect that the Sierra Nevada snowpack, which feeds most of our water reservoirs, will decrease by 64% by 2100. Increased warming will continue to suck moisture out of forests, rangelands, and soils, leaving us even more vulnerable to fire. And by around 2070 we can expect approximately 67 days of temperatures above 100.0 F, despite only having 15 such days from 1961-1990.

Namedrop.

Thousands of prominent scientists, economists and businesses acknowledge the reality of human induced climate change. The world's biggest oil and gas companies acknowledge the reality of human-induced climate change. Investors are asking the CEOs of companies to consider the impact of their operations on climate change and the environment. Experts and decision-makers across the world say climate change is the biggest risk facing them (and have done for many years). Insurance companies understand that climate change will continue to bring tremendous risks.

Share ideas for making an impact.

Finally, when you talk about climate change, you can give people ideas for what they can do about it. Talking about it is meaningful. Voting and encouraging others to vote for candidates who care about climate change is meaningful. Joining organizations that are working on climate change is meaningful. Opportunities are endless, and in this series, we are going to talk, and talk, and talk to you about what you can do and how it helps. Thank you for listening. ■

For more detail, see: www.weforum.org/agenda/2018/06/how-to-talk-about-climate-change-5-tips-from-the-front-lines

LOCAL CONSERVATION NOTES

Forests, Wildfires & Closures

At the start of September, local forests had mostly been spared from the high-severity wildfires that have torched vast forest areas elsewhere this summer. The enormous Dixie Fire near Mt. Lassen and the giant Caldor Fire burning near Tahoe both incinerated hundreds of thousands of acres of prime, mature forests that were important for wildlife, water, and recreation.

Periods of intense smoke affected our region, and the overall amount of raging wildfires caused the Forest Service to close national forest lands to public use until at least mid-September. Sierra Club members should check to be sure the forest closure has been lifted prior to making any plans to go into the local forest.

Yosemite Park Reservation System Stretched

Last spring, in response to the COVID pandemic, Yosemite officials instituted a day-use reservation system for Park visits until at least the end of September. But due to strong pressure from commercial interests to keep Yosemite visitation at a high level, the Park chose to set day-use limits higher than last year, with some adjustments based on COVID levels.

As a result of that pressure to keep visitation high, the Park Service now warns incoming visitors with reservations to expect a delay at entrance stations of one hour on weekdays and up to three hours on weekends. That means that those driving long distances to reach the Park often experience traffic jams and congestion.

Drought Conditions

With a far less than normal snowpack and very little spring rainfall, summer heat has dried up many small forest streams and turned others into scattered stagnant pools. Not only is fire risk elevated, the drought effects are life-threatening for many frogs, toads, turtles, fish and other aquatic species. Be on the lookout for surviving populations of Foothill Yellow-Legged Frogs and report them to John B., who is on our Tuolumne Group ExCom (johnb@cserc.org).



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Due to COVID-19, the Tuolumne Group Executive Committee is currently only meeting by phone or with online sessions. For information on how to participate in the next ExCom call, contact Elaine Hagen at the email listed below.

Chair Jim Bearden, jbearden@ieee.org

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News Editor Joe David, jd@daviddesign.com

We welcome your input and feedback.

NOTES & UPDATES

SIERRA CLUB OUTINGS

Sierra Club Tuolumne Group Outings have been on hold during the COVID pandemic. For the most current information regarding scheduled hikes and current guidelines for Sierra Club outings, go to the outings page on our website: www.sierratuolumne.org.

CONNECT WITH YOUR SIERRA CLUB TUOLUMNE GROUP

Want to get more involved with your local Sierra Club group? Interested in joining our Executive Committee? Have a great idea for a local Sierra Club presentation? There are many ways to volunteer for whatever time you are able to share. Interested members are invited to attend our monthly ExCom meetings.

Email your ideas to Membership Chair, Elaine Hagen at elainehagen@att.net.

GET INVOLVED • TAKE ACTION

Today, years of hard-fought environmental protections are under threat—and to influence governments and businesses, we need everyone to speak up and shout out. Explore how you can get involved: go to www.sierraclub.org/take-action

RATHER RECEIVE THIS NEWSLETTER VIA EMAIL?

If you would like to receive this newsletter via email either instead of, or in addition to our printed edition, email your request to mail@sierratuolumne.org.

The Sequoia Newsletter is designed to provide local members with a trusted source of information on people, events, and issues impacting our environment. Members can find additional information on our updated web page: www.sierratuolumne.org.

