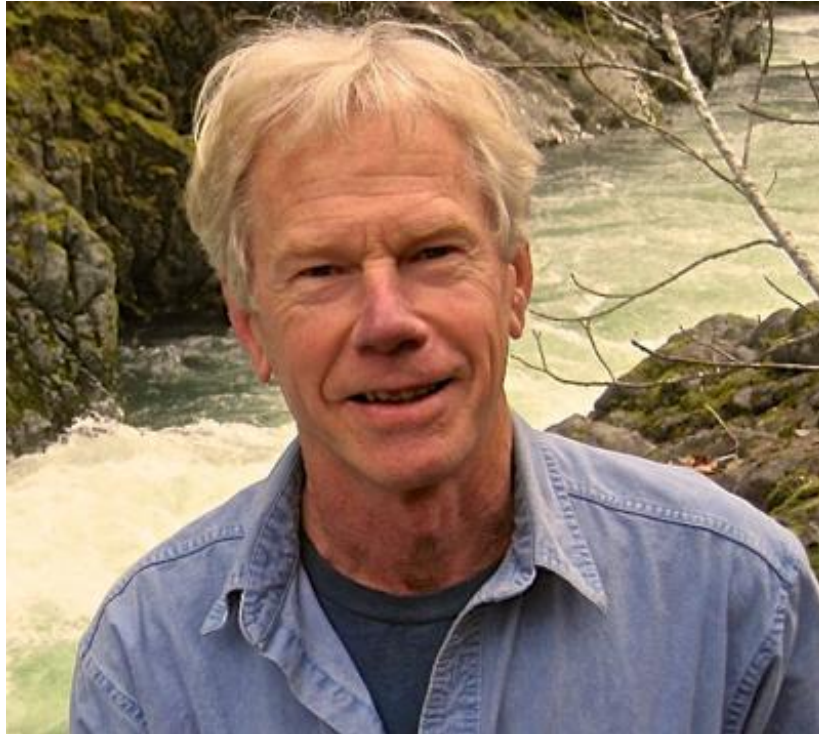


Climate change matters to rural Oregonians

 nrtoday.com/opinion/guest_columns/climate-change-matters-to-rural-oregonians/article_a944192b-56b2-5cb9-a6fa-e60ead2a8e8e.html

Tim Palmer For The News-Review

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A state law to address the problem of our heating climate has again gone the way of legislators' walkout.

It was rural politicians who opposed the climate legislation, though we who live and work here in rural Oregon stand to lose the most if this problem is ignored.

Because of the warming climate, forest fires are worse. The extreme fires threatening timberlands, habitat, homes, towns, and water supplies are driven by higher temperatures, lower humidity, intensified drought, winds, and lightening made more volatile by global warming. If we want trees to log — or for other purposes — we can't have them all burning down. And if we don't want our towns burning down as well — like Paradise, California did — then we have to do something about climate change.

A hotter climate will cause sea level to rise 4 feet this century according to National Climate Assessment, with extreme disruptions and private property losses all along Oregon's 363 mile coastline.

The warming is causing the ocean to acidify, threatening — if not dooming — our commercial and sport fishing industries. See the Jan. 24 Oregonian about crippling losses to the crab fishery if changes are not made. Salmon and steelhead need cold water, and they're not going to get it at the rate we're going. With global warming, you can say goodbye to fishing as we know it. Like carp? That's what we'll have in the North Umpqua.

Storms will rage with coastline erosion, river flooding, and disruption of roads, communications, and power statewide.

Years of work led to Senate Bill 1530 regarding climate change — the best effort of economic analysts and elected officials to date. Major compromises were made to address the opposition, but the bill died of inaction because a lot of rural Oregonians, like me, were telephoned and misinformed by opponents to the bill who warned that we would all have to pay too much.

The bill, in fact, exempted rural people and businesses from most obligations. Industries and utilities in non-urban counties such as mine would not be regulated — they were excluded because they're smaller and rural.

In fact, the program would have generated revenue from cities to address rural problems including wildfire. The bill amounted to a generous gift from urban to rural Oregonians. Forestry and farm operations were flat-out exempt.

Opponents railed against higher gas prices, but the measure would have resulted in an increase of only 15-25 cents per gallon only in the Portland area in 2022, and in some of western Oregon in 2025, and then perhaps a 1-2 penny increase per year through the transition to a renewable-fuel economy (Oregon's Cap-and-Trade Program: an Economic Assessment). Furthermore, low and medium income residents would have been reimbursed for fuel increases, and most rural counties would never be affected by price increases.

No one wants to pay more for gas, but we've done that repeatedly without a whimper. Market fluctuations benefitting oil companies have driven gas prices up \$2.35 per gallon during a single year recently — nine times the 25 cents that was expected with bill 1530. We daily pay more than a 25 cent difference in gas prices varying simply on what brand of gas we buy, or whether we pay by cash or credit card.

Sure, log trucks clock a lot of mileage and their owners don't want to pay more per gallon of diesel. But where will the logs come from after a heating climate with blast-furnace winds and record numbers of fire-igniting lighetning strikes have burned our forests down?

Let's just say that maybe after a few years of total exemption for rural counties, some of us might have to ante up 25 cents a gallon to address the problem of climate change. Well, the voice of republican legislators was loud and clear about that possibility: they're not giving up one crumb to address the greatest threat to life as we know it in rural Oregon and on earth.

We in rural Oregon stand on the front line of harm from global warming. If a minority of our elected officials don't like the approach that was hammered out through ten years of negotiations and hearings, then they who subverted the legislative process should come up with a viable solution of their own. Having no other option, Governor Brown on March 10 signed an executive order to increase state efforts to combat climate change in ways that do not require legislative action.

Otherwise, the rural legislators that got voted into office have left us to face an endless siege of fires and floods, of drought and acidifying oceans — altogether, a shameful legacy to pass on to our children.

We owe more than that to the generations of Oregonians to come.