

Minute On Climate Change Concerns and Policies

Second Month, 2014

“The earth is the Lord’s and all that is in it.” Psalm 24:1

The Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) testimonies of Simplicity, Peace, Integrity, Community, Equality and Stewardship are our guides in dealing with the challenges of global warming and climate change. Annapolis Friends Meeting supports sustainable relationships among the economic, environmental, and social systems—relationships which emphasize humans as interdependent with and nurturing of the environment and of each other. We believe fundamental questions on policy are spiritual and we embrace our responsibility to protect the earth’s life forms and ecosystems.

Annapolis Friends Meeting advocates sustainability and conservation. We support policies leading to sustainable and equitable consumption of energy, sustainable population growth based on universal human rights, and sustainable just economic growth based on healthy ecosystems. These will require development of renewable energy solutions and deliberate action to move away from the primacy of the fossil-fuel resource consumption. The ingenuity to solve problems exists; the will to tackle entrenched interests must be found.

Government, business and all citizens are asked to give full consideration to and implement substantial fees on fossil fuels (coal, oil, natural gas) to make fossil-free energy development and use attractive and to redistribute revenue from such fees as an equal per capita “energy dividend”. For example, place a fee, up-stream at the mine, well-head or port of entry on coal, oil and natural gas and use the return to both support research of renewable energy and technology development to counter negative climate effects and to help people and business meet the added cost of electricity and fuel.

Government and business are urged to support and implement programs to conserve energy and increase technological efficiencies in the use of energy through conservation practices for an overall reduction in energy consumption. Programs should: reduce energy use in residential and commercial buildings by improving insulation and using solar systems; support public transportation; improve energy efficiency of motor vehicles; and create more compact walkable and bikeable communities.

We acknowledge the overwhelming evidence supported by research from diverse fields of science that rapid changes are occurring because of human choices and actions. Of particular danger to life on our planet is the exponential growth in the burning of fossil fuels. The extreme buildup of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere and rising temperatures are degrading the earth’s self-sustaining systems that foster life. As a result of global warming, we are now experiencing—and will continue to experience—significant increases in flooding of coastal areas, drought in agricultural regions, freshwater depletion in watersheds, and severe weather events worldwide. Temperature change and rising sea level negatively affect sea life and destroy habitat. Climate change on land negatively affects agriculture

and significantly impacts the current mass extinction as species are unable to adjust. As the level of greenhouse gas increases the destructive effects will increase. The disruption and destruction of our ecosystems are **now** causing massive extinction of species and increased dangerous weather events. We can anticipate scarcity of resources, injustice, strife and violence. While science confirms that there have been significant temperature and sea level changes in the past, those changes occurred over millennia and longer thus allowing ecosystems time to adapt. What is new is that we are now making changes to the climate in decades not millennia, thereby threatening the adaptability of life, including that of human civilization. Further, these conditions and Earth's systems are interacting in ways that, if left without abatement and reduction of greenhouse gases, are predicted to range from a much more extreme climate to making the Earth uninhabitable.

Major change, especially the reduction of the greenhouse gas carbon dioxide, will be costly. However it will be much more costly to delay change. As conditions worsen, the extent of change required and mitigation of continuing damage will greatly increase our costs. We are living in a time of great risk and opportunity for humans. The health of our planet and human civilization rests on the interconnection of human activity with the natural world.

We assert the fact that we are at one with nature, and give thanks for the beauty of Creation and the gift of life. The storms are gathering. Annapolis Friends Meeting prays that we follow our Testimonies, respect science, and listen to the inward voice urging us to act now for the future of the Earth's children.