

CONFRONTING THE CLIMATE CRISIS

The Olympia Fellowship of Reconciliation – (360) 491-9093 www.olympiafor.org – is working vigorously to protect the climate, along with working for other issues related to peace, social justice and nonviolence.

Our August-September 2014 newsletter offers a few news items about the topics listed below. Our website's section on the Climate Crisis includes a great many more news items, and those links are live. We encourage you to read the newsletter and also visit www.olympiafor.org/Climate_Crisis.html.

Our climate group meets on the third Wednesday of each month at 6:30 pm at the Olympia Center, 222 Columbia Street NW, in downtown Olympia. Info: (360) 352-6327 climate@olympiafor.org

SEE BELOW FOR INFORMATION ABOUT THESE TOPICS:

The Climate Crisis Gets Even Worse

Coal, Oil, Natural Gas, Tar Sands, and Fracking:

Dangerous Trains Are Hauling Coal and Oil

Port of Olympia Imports Proppants for Fracking and More Climate Damage

We Urge Divesting from Fossil Fuel Investments

A Carbon Tax Makes Good Sense

We Are Building the Climate Movement

Other Climate-Related News and Resources

The Climate Crisis Gets Even Worse:

The climate crisis in the larger context of U.S. empire, economic inequality, Peak Oil, the assumption of endless economic growth, corrupt politics, recurring financial crashes, etc.: These are current examples of a civilization that is starting to decline. The fascinating and insightful article at this link -- <http://tinyurl.com/m7hoace> -- examines the decline of great civilizations, including ours. (It's OK to skim a few paragraphs where the author summarizes his recent and upcoming blog posts. The more substantive parts of this article are elsewhere within this article.)

Climate change reality will force us to abandon endless economic growth: This article by Peak Oil researcher/writer Richard Heinberg is compelling and much shorter than the one noted above. The "conventional wisdom" of politics, economics, etc., is not sustainable. The laws of physics, geology, atmospheric science, etc. expose the hard realities. We need to choose sustainability and abandon the myth that endless economic growth is possible. Climate change is a hard reality that will force us to abandon that myth. See Richard Heinberg's excellent new article posted on Common Dreams. Heinberg is perhaps the best current writer on Peak Oil and related topics. See his insightful new article at this link: <http://tinyurl.com/p345o67>

Global warming is making Washington State's wildfires even worse: In late July the Sightline Institute (www.sightline.org) publicized their "talking points" about global warming and wildfires. They emphasized that global warming is fueling dangerous "mega fires." See <http://tinyurl.com/puujzgw>

California is now experiencing the most severe drought ever recorded: See info at <http://tinyurl.com/mxkgwuz>

Drought leads to depleting groundwater: A new study shows that the parched West is using up underground water at an alarming rate. See <http://tinyurl.com/p2xh69f>

May and June of 2014 were the hottest on record: <http://tinyurl.com/ofop2ks>

Climate Scientists See 'Very Rapid Declines' in Annual NOAA Report: <http://tinyurl.com/m6cnu2b>

Carbon dioxide levels just reached 402 ppm: <http://tinyurl.com/ps9apz9>

Coal, Oil, Natural Gas, Tar Sands, and Fracking:

US government sells coal from public lands far too cheaply: On July 24, 2014, Sightline released a new report on the US Bureau of Land Management's coal leasing programs, titled, *"Unfair Market Value: By Ignoring Exports, BLM Underprices Federal Coal."* The report documents the facts that coal companies operating in the western U.S. are buying coal from the American public with the explicit goal of shipping that coal overseas, but the BLM charges coal companies far less than it should because of the profitability of exporting coal from public lands. The U.S. government is subsidizing coal companies millions of dollars every year at taxpayers' expense. See <http://daily.sightline.org/2014/07/24/coal-exports-unfair-market-value/>

In late July 2014, the South Portland, Maine, City Council voted to prohibit toxic tar sands oil from being loaded onto tankers: It's a coastal port. The vote was overwhelming to stop the oil industry's escalating plans to ship Canadian tar sands. See <http://tinyurl.com/qe647vz>

Blockade at First Tar Sands Site in US Challenges "Brazen Disregard for Climate Crisis" – See www.commondreams.org/headline/2014/07/21-3

Grassroots organizations help China move away from coal: See <http://tinyurl.com/m23kuys>

On June 30, 2014, the New York Court of Appeals decided that local towns can use zoning laws to prohibit fracking there: This precedent-setting case pertains to the towns of Dryden and Middlefield, NY, and pertains to other heavy industry. See info at <http://tinyurl.com/osdm4on>

EXCITING success story about into NY's opposition to fracking – a legal loophole that can win: Corporations have corrupted the laws so the corporations manipulate the "regulatory" process. But in New York state, farmers and other landowners who wanted to prevent fracking found that they could legally PROHIBIT fracking, even though the law would not let them "regulate" it. This point comes up at about 5 minutes into this fascinating 11-minute video: <http://tinyurl.com/m9yhrd9> This is a powerful distinction that the "Community Rights Ordinance" (CRO) movement has jumped onto. See www.celdf.org and the Olympia FOR's April 2014 TV program, which you can watch on the "TV Programs" page at www.olympiafor.org Also see more info about this case at www.earthjustice.org

Keystone XL pipeline's South Dakota segment will be delayed: TransCanada's permit for the Keystone XL in South Dakota expired at the end of June 2014. That state's permit had been issued in 2010 when Keystone XL was considered "a done deal" and was expected to be completed in just a few years. However, an historic national alliance of farmers, ranchers, tribal leaders and climate activists has delayed the pipeline so effectively that its permit for construction in South Dakota has expired. TransCanada will not be able to proceed in South Dakota without a new permit there.

Canadian Supreme Court recognizes a tribe's right to prevent tar sands pipeline across their land: Here is an interesting article with more information about pipeline routes, etc. The author is optimistic about stopping more tar sands shipping. See <http://tinyurl.com/n8wgcon>

Scientists call for a moratorium on tar sands development: www.commondreams.org/headline/2014/06/25-8

Fracking industry loses an important court case: "Losing this case was not good for the industry," said Thomas McGarity, a University of Texas law school professor who specializes in environmental and administrative law, in a recent interview with *InsideClimate News*. "My guess is the industry will coalesce around this case. The industry will want to stop the dam from breaking wide open. ...This is where they will take a stand." Robert Percival, director of the University of Maryland's Environmental Law Program, said the judge's decision was "another important step toward providing redress to those exposed to the unpleasant side effects of fracking operations." Info: <http://tinyurl.com/lt9dcyl>

Dangerous Trains Are Hauling Coal and Oil:

Do live in the blast zone for explosive oil trains? See map here: www.explosive-crude-by-rail.org

Oil train derailed in Seattle on July 24, 2014: The 102-car oil train accident occurred a little north of downtown Seattle in the Interbay neighborhood. The accident drew a strong reaction from Fawn Sharp, President of the Quinault Indian Nation, and President of the Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians and Area Vice President of the National Congress of American Indians. She said, "It was sheer luck that the cars, carrying 100 loads of Bakken crude oil, didn't spill or even catch fire. If that had occurred the chances are there would have been tragic loss. If fire had occurred, the odds are it would have burned out of control for days and oil would have made its way into Puget Sound. People need to know that every time an oil train travels by this is the risk that is being taken." See more info at <http://daily.sightline.org/2014/07/24/oil-train-derails-in-seattle/>

See this new video documentary titled, "The Crude Gamble of Oil by Rail: Bomb Trains" – This 23 ½-minute video shows and explains the "pipeline on rails" that will increasingly endanger our region unless we stop it. <http://daily.sightline.org/2014/07/28/video-the-northwests-bomb-trains/>

Safer oil trains in the U.S. will be delayed for several years: Public pressure convinced President Obama to call for safer oil trains, but the process of federal rule-making and bringing new oil tank cars into service could take more than three years. See this link:

<http://tinyurl.com/l9hav8a> The regulations proposed are weaker than they should be, and since they would not go into effect until 2017, shipping crude by rail will continue to be dangerous. More info: <http://tinyurl.com/mb3no3k>

Chehalis City Council considers a resolution addressing the dangers of Bakken oil trains moving through Chehalis:

Dangerous oil trains rolling through downtown Chehalis and Centralia have caught the attention of the public and the Chehalis City Council. A new organization, Lewis County for Safe Rails, convinced the Chehalis City Council to pass a resolution 4-to-2 on July 28, expressing its concern about shipping North Dakota Bakken Crude Oil through city limits. The city government has no legal power to prevent shipments, but the resolution carries moral and political weight. It calls on Gov. Jay Inslee to analyze whether the oil shipments are in the public's best interest and, if so, to ship it in the safest way possible. It also calls on the Washington State Department of Transportation and a regulatory agency to study the matter. More info is at <http://tinyurl.com/ky8zxyq> Get more information about this and Lewis County for Safe Rails from Larry Kerschner (360) 880-4741 larry@peacepoet.me

More information about oil trains in Thurston County – especially if new export terminals in Grays Harbor – with implications for rail lines crossing roads and rail routes through residential areas: <http://tinyurl.com/lpqywcl> and this in downtown Tenino, paralleling McDuff Road: <http://tinyurl.com/jw5ozy7> Also, on July 3, 2014, the *Olympian* editorialized for more transparency: “On oil trains, state fights for public’s right to know.”

Oil trains could hurt NW economy by taking precedence over other kinds of cargo: Angel Gonzalez, a business reporter for the *Seattle Times*, wrote an article about this on July 26, 2014, and updated it the next day. He wrote that the oil trains hauling North Dakota crude oil are delaying trains hauling our locally grown grain to Pacific NW ports, and the problem would get much worse if even more oil trains are allowed.

Preparations underway for big increase in coal trains here and coal exports from Bellingham: Developers of the largest of the region’s proposed coal-export terminals have shifted their site plan to claim they are reducing impacts on wetlands. Meanwhile, SSA Marine, the Seattle international terminal operator, said it will speed up plans to operate Gateway Pacific Terminal (GPT) north of Bellingham at full capacity. The capacity planning, along with plentiful evidence that BNSF Railway is beefing up its tracks in northwestern Washington to prepare for more coal and oil traffic, alerted terminal foes and brought immediate pushback Monday from the Bellingham City Council. Potentially adding fuel to the fire, BNSF and its largest union are moving toward a contract that allows the railroad to run the 130-car, mile-plus-long coal trains with a single engineer in the cab, replacing the present practice of two in the cab. See Floyd McKay’s article in *Crosscut*: <http://tinyurl.com/qeawnq7>

Protect our communities – and our taxpayers – from coal and oil trains: While supporters of exporting coal and oil claim economic benefits for our region, they are ignoring costs that could offset those benefits. State Rep. Reuven Carlyle (D-Seattle), who chairs the House finance committee, says that a new report implies that the economic benefits (jobs and tax revenue) from new export terminals “are incredibly modest,” but “the costs are off the charts.” The anticipated benefits would be quickly gobbled up by the need for new roads to get around congested railroad tracks. See <http://tinyurl.com/nd8s5aj>

Sign petition urging Gov. Jay Inslee to oppose oil export terminals in Grays Harbor: <http://tinyurl.com/jw68at2>

350 Seattle paid for this powerful bus ad appearing on Metro buses to oppose more oil trains: <http://tinyurl.com/m48rz6>

Short videos of oil trains in our region: Robert Whitlock shot this video in July over the Nisqually River:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XO19KvNPJ3o> Someone else shot this video from Horsethief Lake State Park:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TFTxSUYIKF8>

Short video of a coal train near Tenino WA on July 3, 2014: <http://olyblog.net/coal-train-today>

More info on exploding oil trains: <http://tinyurl.com/ktxpeec>

Port of Olympia Imports Proppants for Fracking and More Climate Damage:

Climate supporters won a victory when 2 of 3 Port Commissioners voted to delay building Warehouse B for proppants until completing a thorough SEPA review: In July 2014 two of three Port of Olympia Commissioners voted to reject all bids for building a new Warehouse B for storing proppants for shipment to North Dakota’s Bakken oil fields, where massive fracking occurs. Port projects had been handled on a piecemeal basis but really need a comprehensive Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) related to the State Environmental Policy Act. Bev Bassett, an active member of the Olympia FOR’s Confronting the Climate Crisis group, which has been working on the issue, wrote that proppants “are tiny ceramic beads essential to fracking. The proppants, imported from China, are shipped by rail to the Bakken shale oil fields where they are blasted into the shale to ‘prop’ the rocks open so that tar sands oil can be extracted. The highly volatile oil product is then put onto rail cars and shipped back to China where it is ultimately burned. We in the Olympia Fellowship of Reconciliation’s Climate Crisis Action Group oppose The Port of Olympia’s aiding and abetting fracking.” See <http://tinyurl.com/mxbh8yf>

We Urge Divesting from Fossil Fuel Investments:

Urging colleges, universities, local governments, pension funds, etc., to divest from fossil fuels is a great way to “think globally and act locally.” The Divestment Movement allows local people to set short-term local goals in bite-size pieces. Cumulatively, the Divestment Movement can accomplish a lot.

The Unitarian-Universalist church’s national level is divesting from fossil fuels: See www.commondreams.org/headline/2014/06/29-1

The World Council of Churches – representing 590 million Christians – urges churches to divest from fossil fuel companies: See <http://tinyurl.com/lecocup>

Bill McKibben’s new article on divestment: While the divestment movement grows, some people are arguing against divesting, such as a July 10, 2014, article in the New York *Times* that pooh-poohs the divestment movement. Bill McKibben wrote an article urging more people to consider whether their investments are hurting the climate, and to act responsibly for the future. Already many people are making positive choices. Read McKibben’s article at www.commondreams.org/view/2014/07/10-9

A petition urging the State of Washington to divest: The Olympia Fellowship of Reconciliation’s “Confronting the Climate Crisis” group might develop a petition urging the State of Washington to divest from fossil fuels. The draft was not ready for public use when this news item was posted here. For the latest information contact Bourtai Hargrove at (360) 352-6327 climate@olympiafor.org

Another nonprofit organization offers information about divesting from fossil fuels: www.gofossilfree.org

The British Medical Association was the first big health association to divest: The BMA’s Dr. Jane Richards, stated, “Reducing greenhouse gases will . . . have health and economic benefits. . . . “It is now time to reduce our reliance on [fossil fuels].” The BMA will transfer those investments into environmentally sound investments. Info: <http://tinyurl.com/o3utju3>

Climate change makes for “risky business,” says a reliable non-profit org: The Institute for Policy Studies (www.ips-dc.org) has a long, distinguished reputation as a source of information and advocacy from a progressive orientation. In late June 2014 IPS’s executive director wrote, “You know the climate change debate is at a critical turning point when even business leaders are claiming that not addressing climate change is ‘risky business’ in *Forbes*.” IPS’s Climate Policy program is working on the crisis. Their “New Economy Maryland” project recently partnered with the Chesapeake Sustainable Business Council to address these issues on a local level. IPS is involved with the growing **Divest–Invest** movement. See the next item below.

The respected Institute for Policy Studies now calls for divestment: The Institute for Policy Studies (IPS, www.ips-dc.org) has a long reputation for providing solid information about progressive issues. Now IPS is building the movement for people and institutions to divest from fossil fuels. See www.divestinvest.org.

Republican Henry Paulson, former Secretary of the U.S. Dept. of Treasury, wrote an article in the June 21, 2014, issue of *New York Times*, (“The Coming Climate Crash”), warning that we are in a bubble now regarding fossil fuel investments: Oil and coal companies have five times more assets underground than can be safely sold and burned without damaging the climate beyond a tolerable limit. At some point the nations of the world will wise up and prevent extraction and sale. Then those assets will be worthless, so oil and coal companies will have to write off about \$20 TRILLION of assets down to zero, and their stock prices will plummet. In June 2014 Paulson joined with some of our nation’s top business people in releasing this week a “**Risky Business Project**” report that will influence business and investor decisions worldwide. His approach leads him to vigorously support a carbon tax. But the risks of fossil fuel investments should also lead to divesting as well. Paulson’s article deserves wider circulation.

A Carbon Tax Makes Good Sense:

British Columbia’s highly successful carbon tax: <http://tinyurl.com/k3kkac1>

Why Washington State should enact a carbon tax like British Columbia’s: On July 25, 2014, Sightline published an overview of the latest iteration of our CarbonWA proposal and its benefits in terms of policy and politics. See the article “Why Washington State Should Adopt a BC-Style Carbon Tax” at this link: <http://tinyurl.com/kyrt9yj> **Much more information about a carbon tax is at www.carbonwa.org and its blog, <http://carbonwa.org/blog/>**

We Are Building the Climate Movement:

Paul Krugman reports that right-wing politicians are denouncing efforts to protect the climate as “Marxist” and full of economic perils. See <http://tinyurl.com/kfhkja5>

Tell Fox News, CNN, and MSNBC to stop giving equal credence to climate change deniers: In July 2014 the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) stopped giving equal airtime to climate deniers because real science is so clear and giving equal time to deniers has been misleading the public. Now a new petition campaign urges Fox News, CNN and MSNBC to stop their complicity

in misleading the public. Sign the petition at this link: <http://tinyurl.com/mugom4k> It is organized by Interfaith Power and Light, a nonprofit organization of faith-based people working to mobilize the public to protect the climate and our wonderful natural world. See www.interfaithpowerandlight.org

How 16 major economies stack up on energy efficiency: Germany leads the world in energy efficiency, followed by Italy, the European Union, China and France, according to a new ranking of the world's 16 largest economies by the American Council for an Energy-Efficient Economy. See the slideshow at this link: <http://tinyurl.com/lqtc4zs>

Sunday September 21 in New York City: The People's Climate March will be the largest march in world history to protect the climate. The Olympia FOR's "Confronting the Climate Crisis" group is sending two young people there. Info: www.peoplesclimate.org and www.stopglobalwarming.org and www.350.org

Sunday August 24 in NE Olympia: The Olympia FOR's "Confronting the Climate Crisis" will staff a booth with climate information at the 4th Annual "Love Our Local" fest on San Francisco Street NE (near Bethel, etc.) from 1:00 to 9:00 pm. If you know the climate issues and want to help staff the booth, please phone Glen Anderson at 491-9093 or e-mail glen@olympiafor.org Info about the event: www.loveourlocalfest.org

The youth-oriented (ages 14-18) Next Generation Climate Justice Action Camp will occur in Hillsboro, Oregon from Thursday August 14 to Sunday August 17, 2014: See info at <http://tinyurl.com/qxbk35h>

Starting and sustaining local climate groups: A few pages of ideas for starting a small group to work on the climate crisis and helping existing small groups to start working on the climate are available from Grassroots Coalition for Environmental and Economic Justice, 21431 Marlin Circle, Shade Gap PA 17255, c/o John Conner, (814) 259-3680 grassroots1@pa.net.

Other Climate-Related News and Resources:

Top 10 Questions on the EPA's Proposed Carbon Standard: On June 2, 2014, the U.S. government introduced a proposal to reduce carbon emissions from power plants. Labeled the Clean Power Plan, the proposal establishes state limits on carbon emissions, which the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) projects by 2030 will reduce carbon emissions nationwide by 30 percent compared to 2005 levels. The knowledgeable non-profit organization Public Citizen (www.citizen.org) (founded by Ralph Nader) published answers to frequently asked questions about this. See www.citizen.org/SSLPage.aspx?pid=6353

Washington State simplifies and reduces cost of installing rooftop solar panels: On July 17, 2014, Washington State's Building Code Council has unanimously approved a change in state law to allow installation of simple rooftop solar power systems without review by an engineer. This change should reduce project costs by \$500 to \$2,500 and eight weeks of review time previously experienced by homeowners, state Department of Commerce officials said. An emergency rule approving the change went into effect July 1. The council is expected to approve the permanent rule in November after public hearings and formal rulemaking. The building code change had the support of Northwest Solar Communities, a coalition of jurisdictions, utilities, industry partners and citizen groups working to make rooftop solar systems more affordable.

What are "adaptive markets"? How could they help reduce emissions? Read this July 10, 2014, article promoted by the Center for American Progress: <http://tinyurl.com/ngnzomc>

Michael Klare – for decades one of the best experts who links foreign policy and fossil fuels – recently wrote another great article about this: The article is long but very informative: "Raging Energy Wars: Global Conflict Fueled by Oil and Natural Gas," <http://tinyurl.com/nmyogf5>

Another study finds methane leaks from abandoned wells offset benefits of natural gas as a bridge fuel: See <http://tinyurl.com/me6gtqy>

State-by-state governors' positions on the climate crisis: <http://tinyurl.com/nh5uzun>

Insurance company sues local jurisdictions for failing to mitigate against climate change: Here is an interesting new approach! Local and state governments had better take action to protect from climate damage. The *Insurance Journal*, an industry publication, published an article (<http://www.insurancejournal.com/news/national/2014/05/19/329506.htm>) about an insurance company's suit against local governments that did not do enough to protect from losses due to climate-caused damage. The article says, "Farmers Insurance filed nine class actions last month against nearly 200 communities in the Chicago area. It is arguing that local governments should have known rising global temperatures would lead to heavier rains and did not do enough to fortify their sewers and stormwater drains." It's not very often that the environmental movement and the insurance industry are on the same side, but here is an opportunity for "strange bedfellows."

More opportunities for "strange bedfellows" -- Sensible Republicans know we must take action to stop global warming: Switching to renewable energy will create much needed prosperity and jobs. Let's cross the aisle and get it done now. See <http://tinyurl.com/qgyz625> Also, the chairman of the nation's largest private company told the 1% to worry about climate change: <http://tinyurl.com/qgd7qyp>

Al Gore's June 18, 2014, essay about the climate sees hope: The climate crisis is extremely serious. Many people avoid looking at the realities because they are so frightening. But Al Gore's new article in *Rolling Stone* sees reasons for hope. For

example, solar energy has become economically competitive with traditional sources, and technology for storing solar energy in your home has become affordable and efficient. Gore's statement that "**fossil fuel markets are at risk, while markets for solar and wind are expanding**" supports the DIVESTMENT emphasis of the Olympia Fellowship of Reconciliation's "Confronting the Climate Crisis" group. Therefore, if you own stocks or bonds issued by fossil fuel companies or the companies that service the fossil fuel industry, sell them now. Also, check your mutual funds, retirement funds, insurance companies' assets, and other entities for fossil fuel investments, and urge them to divest before the bubble bursts. See this quotation from late in the article:

"Several large banks and asset managers around the world (full disclosure: Generation Investment Management, which I co-founded with David Blood and for which I serve as chairman, is in this group) have advised their clients of the danger that **carbon assets will become "stranded."** A "stranded asset" is one whose price is vulnerable to a sudden decline when markets belatedly recognize the truth about their underlying value – just as the infamous "subprime mortgages" suddenly lost their value in 2007 to 2008 once investors came to grips with the fact that the borrowers had absolutely no ability to pay off their mortgages."

Also, rooftop solar collectors enhance decentralized energy instead of the centralized corporate utilities, and More and more nations are converting to solar energy. However, fossil fuel companies and their propagandists are worried, so they spreading lies. Therefore, we need to inform ourselves and spread the real information to counter the disinformation. Al Gore's new article is long (6 pages at this link), but it is worth reading. If you haven't read it yet, read it now, to learn more information that you can share with other people and build the movement to save our climate. **Here is the link to Gore's article: <http://tinyurl.com/oljwb34>** Despite grounds for hope, Al Gore's new article also lays out some extremely serious facts about global climate disruption. It's worth reading to beef up our knowledge of the facts, in addition to learning about progress related to alternative energy and opportunities to beat traditional utilities. More than halfway through the article he states that democracy has been hacked by big business corporations, and he also calls for putting a price on carbon.