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Guest Opinion: Climate change matters to the well-being of Montana's citizens

By **GINGER ROLL**

When Montanans think about climate change, most of us think about the melting glaciers in Glacier National Park and the increasing frequency and duration of wildfires. We know these are real threats and we find them scary, but we tend to think about climate change in terms far removed from our everyday lives. According to a recent Center for Excellence in Climate Change Communication Research poll, less than half of Americans believe they are personally at risk from global warming, but significantly more believe it is a threat to future generations (60 percent) or to all life (57 percent).

In fact, climate change has a direct connection to all of us. It has, and will have, real consequences for the health of our communities, our families and our children.

The World Health Organization reports that human-induced changes in the Earth's climate now lead to at least 5 million cases of illness and more than 150,000 deaths each year. In recent years, the scientific community has started to understand more about the negative impacts climate change has on our health and on an already strained public health system.

There is a laundry list of health issues that are growing more problematic as a result of increased climate variability and it includes: heat stroke and hypothermia, asthma, cardiovascular and pulmonary illness, and gastrointestinal illnesses associated with water contamination. Montana has already seen the arrival of the West Nile Virus, just one example of a disease that is spreading as a result of carriers, like mosquitoes and ticks, expanding their habitat.

What's more, the most vulnerable members of our population - those who depend on the public health system for their care, including the poor, the chronically ill, the elderly, the disabled and the uninsured - are most affected by the health impacts of climate change, adding

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another layer to the already existing moral dimension of healthcare.

Montanans need to understand the connection between climate change and health so that they can be armed with the information they need to make choices and lead lifestyles that are healthy for them, their communities and the planet.

This week, the American Public Health Association and Montana Public Health Association observed National Public Health Week. By making climate change this year's theme, APHA hopes to start a major shift in how our society thinks about and addresses this looming challenge.

According to APHA, there are five important ways Americans can take action:

- Be prepared. Inform yourself about the health impacts of climate change and regional climate change issues facing your community and take actions to prepare for possible disasters.
- Travel differently. Leave the car at home one day, and take public transportation instead. Walk or bike - if you need to drive, car pool - and, if you can, telecommute.
- Eat differently. Buy food from a community farmer's market and that doesn't travel across the country to get to your supermarket shelves. Eat more vegetables and less meat.
- Green your work. Use recycled paper if you don't already, and even if you do, print less often and on both sides of the paper. Set your computer to energy-saver mode and buy eco-friendly office furniture.
- Green your home. Insulate your home so that energy isn't literally going out the window. Reduce your use of wasteful products, reuse or recycle the products you do use and conserve water.

These five changes can chart a path toward a healthier lifestyle and climate. Visit www.nphw.org to learn more.

Ginger Roll, president of Montana Public Health Association, is a public health nurse with the Rosebud County Public Health Department in Forsyth.

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Conan the Libertarian said 5 days ago
Global climate change has been occurring for a long time. Remember the last ice age? It will continue to happen with or without the input of man. These changes are subtle and will not be noticed by us in our lifetimes. The author of this article is obviously either ignorant and ready to accept whatever anyone tells him, or is a part of the media's conspiracy to make us THINK there is a pending crisis which can only be solved by Big Brother (i.e. more government laws and intrusion into our way of life.) Everyone should question the statement that global warming is responsible for "150,000 deaths per year." How about some backup for that "fact?"

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marion said 5 days ago

Exactly what climate induced illnesses are killing all of these people. I have learned to be very sceptical about huge round numbers thrown out to make a point and alarm people. By the way, there has been no increase in temps now for 10 years, since 1998, in fact a slight decrease, but not statistically significant. So why is the drum beat about gw still going? I have no problem with recycling, using less resources, etc, but when anyone starts propagandizing about people dying, I'd like to see some actual facts. I believe some folks did freeze to death this winter across the country, was that due to global warming?

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ollie said 5 days ago

Go to www.oism.org/project Over 19,000 scientists have signed a petition saying global warming probably is a natural, cyclic occurrence and not the crisis Al Gore has portrayed it. 19,000 scientists say Al Gore is full of it.

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CDinWY said 5 days ago

Since the truth of global warming is slowly being learned and GW is being debunked, we are beginning to see "climate change" as the new lexicon. The earth's climate has been in a continuous state of change since it began spinning on its axis. A certain twisted arrogance is required to think that man is so omnipotent that we can control climate. We have no more control over weather and climate than we have of the ocean tides.

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CDN said 5 days ago

Ginger, how can the WHO attribute a single illness to global warming? Where is any proof? We do know that it does lead to a loss of common sense and has caused increased gullibility among the "we are all going to die" crowd.

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Are you human? said 5 days ago

I am sure all the farmers and ranchers in Rosebud will take you up on the suggestion of telecommuting, or walking and biking to work...Seriously, none of these suggestions are a drop in the bucket compared to the output of CO2 by China, it is only a way for the global warming crowd to feel good about themselves and superious to others without having to make any sacrifices in their own consumption.

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TAXED4U said 5 days ago

I like the buying locally grown food idea. Right, drive your Toyota Prius with its batteries made from lead mined in an eco disaster in Canada, shipped to a half dozen places overseas for processing and manufacture before being put in your Japanese car and shipped to America. And that is just the batteries. But you will use less gasoline - personally. The other good advice is to CREATE less trash. Even trash that is re-cycled requires energy to re-cycle it. So - in the computer age, when you are all reading your articles and writing comments on-line - why have magazines and newspapers delivered to your home? Unless you have a Parrot or a Gerbil. Think of the environmental savings we could all make if we did not buy magazines or newspapers! Think of the trees that would be saved, all the production related energy consumed, all the delivery costs polluting our mother earth. It seems like one of the most selfish sins that we all take for granted these days. While we raise water rates to reduce water consumption, pay carbon credits etc. But we still feel that need to support and entire pulp, paper and print industry while we share our green suggestions on the computer.

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Crash Davis said 5 days ago

But Ollie, Al Gore said so. Amazing to me is the fact that he is making millions upon millions off GW and that doesn't matter to most people or allow them to see GW for what it is, just a money making venture for the right people.

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VirgilM said 5 days ago

One huge benefit of the warmer climate that we have experienced the last 20 years is less crop damage due to frost and freezes. During the little Ice Age in Europe from

1450 to 1850, crop failures from the cold resulted in famine and disease. I'm glad that I don't live in such an era of climate history. As a son of a Minnesota dairy farmer, I learned that it was easier to deal with drought than with crop damaging frost. If need be, we could always irrigate to get us through. There is no such solution for the cold. I personally don't know anyone who died from heat stroke, but I know a handfull that died from the cold. If our climate warms, many more people will be saved from dying from the cold than will die from heat stroke. They are already seeing this in Europe the last 30 years. Today it will be warm, so I will get out of the house to do some yard work...that is my path to a healthier lifestyle. Now that it is warmer, my wife can walk the kids to school...healthier lifestyle. I can't understand why Ginger wants it colder.

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Craig Moore said 5 days ago

The drumbeat of unsubstantiated horrors never ceases. Regarding which way the climate will change, Roger Pielke, Sr. has an interesting column on the models used to "forecast" such change:
www.climatesci.org/2008/04/11/real-climates-agreement-that-the-ipcc-multi-decadal-projections-are-actually-sensitivity-model-runs/ During the middle ages, the cold drove the rats inside for warmth. Over 30 million people died from the plague connected to global cooling. West Nile was not brought to us by global warming, but by intercontinental air travel. We should focus on regional issues: clean air, clean water, food sources, energy, and land use while foregoing the hype.

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flowergal said 5 days ago

The moving jaw is visible on this puppet writer for the UN that is absorbing our sovereignty along with our cash and real estate - now, that's pollution. We've moved on from four-letter illiteracy to five-letter idiocy. Green is just a color, get it? Not a religion. Well, I guess Fat AI has made it a cult. And rich, too, because of a dearth of minds willing to expend the energy to do their own thinking. Once upon a time, a fool was born every minute; that has been technically reduced to nanosecond sound bite.

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ollie said 4 days ago

Hey...TAXED4U...I am doing my part. I can't my

newspaper subscription about five years ago... miss the Sunday adds, but didn't want to continue to contribute to the Gazette slant by buying the paper. Don't own a parrot or a gerbil, so no problem there.

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tripolar said 4 days ago
the climate is but one small integral part of the natural selection process that cannot be changed.

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Chuck Feney said 4 days ago
There is a huge difference between climate change, which is ongoing, solar based, and a natural, unstoppable phenomena AND the cultish global warming scare which assumes, based on grant motivated pseudo science, that man is the do all and be all of everything on this sphere. I'll buy the former but not the latter.

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dave f said 4 days ago
Ginger, Could you please explain what in the world "Center for Excellence in Climate Change" means...Excellence in Climate Change????????????? huh??? Who are they, what is their mission, how are they funded and what gives them credibility. Maybe when we understand who the "Center" is, we can then understand where and how all this nonsense gets started..JEEZ!

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lefty the cowboy said 4 days ago
Look out, the 'Earth Is Flat' crowd is in full song. I gotta tell ya, I really get a kick out of such determined ignorance, it just makes me grin like crazy. If progressives are ever worried that humans won't continue to advance toward greater justice and elightenment, just listen to these 'global warming is a commie trick' people for a few minutes. It will give you great comfort to see who we are up against.

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Craig Moore said 4 days ago

Recently, when a chunk of ice broke off from the Antarctic, there was the renewed buzz over global warming and that all the ice would melt. However, the opposite is occurring:
arctic.atmos.uiuc.edu/cryosphere/IMAGES/current.365.south.jpg
Our global climate is dynamic and ever changing.
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TAXED4U said 4 days ago
ollie - Great - reducing our carbon footprint one newspaper at a time. I was not sleeping well one night and was looking out the window in the predawn hours, when a car came down the street, went up a dead end, backed up my driveway, and went down the street in the wrong lane dodging cars parked on the street. I thought it must be a drunk driver and was almost dialing the police - when I realized - it was a newspaper delivery person! It had been so long since I have had a paper delivered, that probability had just slipped my mind. Then I remembered - some people still have a physical copy of a paper delivered to their house in the predawn hours, 7 days a week, by a gasoline powered delivery system. Just as I had delivered papers myself for a while decades ago. A job so many of us have had - yet destined for extinction.
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Feldspar said 3 days ago
Nothing gets them swinging from the trees like a climate change story. The article said "Buy food from a community farmer's market" - Marion's response, "propagandizing"! The article said "Inform yourself" - CDN's response, "loss of common sense"! The article said "Walk or bike" - Flowergal's response, "a fool was born every minute"! All you hyper conservatives that post here so religiously are so silly it's amazing. I'm absolutely convinced now that conservatives hate America simply because to work together with their neighbor for the benefit of all is too much of an affront to their selfish greed.
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TankMac said 2 days ago
Ms. Roll - While most of your suggestions for saving energy and money are good ideas, I still have a lot of trouble w/ human caused global climate change. I think you have a very high opinion of human impact. Don't you think if man could change the weather/temp, he wouldn't already be making money doing it? BTW who has proved

to anyone that a change in the weather is bad?

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Dave Skinner said 1 day ago

Eat my vegetables? You gotta be kidding! Ginger, you may be paid to be my nanny, but you don't deserve to be and I don't want you to be.

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