

The Lathrop GREEN SHEET



An occasional newsletter from the Lathrop Community's Green Committee

The Lathrop Communities (Affiliate of the Kendal Corporation), 100 Bassett Brook Drive, Easthampton, MA, 01027

WHY? WARS/RISING OCEANS/MELTING GLACIERS/STORM SURGES/POLAR BEARS/JELLY FISH/...

Climate Comments #1 - Al Eipper

Ecologically speaking, our climate crisis is the greatest threat to life on earth since the last great extinction 65 million years ago.

As our 'greenhouse blanket' of carbon dioxide and other gases continues to thicken and our planet continues to heat, here are some benchmarks showing where we stand now: First, the 'blanket': the carbon dioxide level in the atmosphere is now 387 parts per million (ppm), up 40 percent since the industrial revolution, the highest for at least the last 650,000 years, and currently increasing by 2 ppm per year.

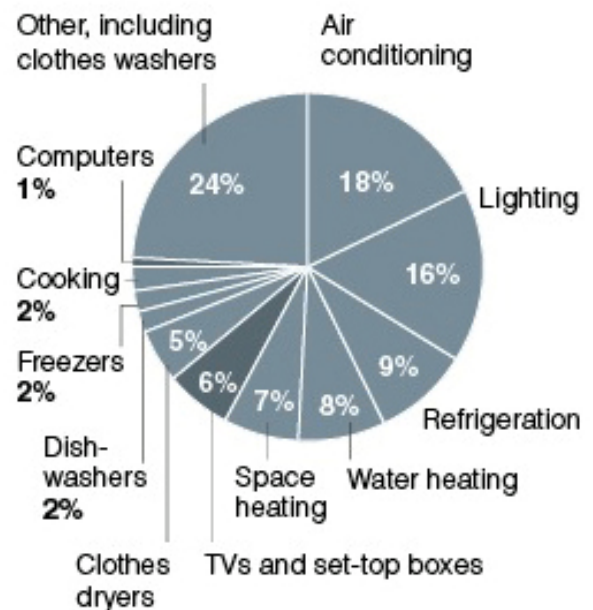
Global air temperature data show that 12 of the planet's 13 warmest years since record keeping began in 1880 have occurred in the last 13 years. The 23 warmest years on record have occurred since 1980. More ominous than air temperature rises, in July-August 2009 world-wide *ocean* temperatures reached 62.6 degrees F., the highest ever recorded.

Ice melting, far more extensive than predicted two years earlier, and faster than experts had believed possible, is one of the most dramatic and worrisome recent manifestations of climate change. This melting includes Himalayan glaciers that are the freshwater supply for a major segment of the world population. It includes the Greenland ice cap which contains enough melt potential to raise world sea levels 23 feet. Even more unexpected, it includes the Antarctic ice sheet, which contains 70 percent of the planet's fresh water.

WHAT YOU CAN DO (LATHROP'S "BEST PRACTICES")...

- Reduce, reuse, recycle;
- Turn out the lights!
- Turn down water heater (= 120°);
- Use programmable thermostats;
- Buy Local;
- Install CFL light-bulbs;
- Cloth bags to the grocers;
- Power strips for chargers, etc.;
- Keep tires properly inflated!

US RESIDENTIAL CONSUMPTION OF ELECTRICITY, 2005 (from *The NYTimes*)



WASHING HANDS – COLD OR HOT?

From the “Really?” column in a recent *NY-Times* Science section (10/13/09): They ask, “is warm or hot water really more effective than cold in resisting infection?” A 2005 study in the *Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine* concluded that “the various temperatures had no effect on transient or resident bacterial reduction ... temperature of water used for hand washing should not be guided by antibacterial effects but comfort ... in the tepid to warm range.” The “bottom line”: “hot water for hand washing has not been proved to remove germs better than cold water.”

From Green Action by Lee Hawkins

How are *you* doing? Are you more conscious of your impact on the environment? It’s hard not to be. Green, for sure, is the color of the era! Not a day goes by that I don’t learn about some new group turning green, a healthy green. Today it was an article in the *Gazette* about actions taken by school kids, recycling, composting, growing fresh vegetables that, (surprise!) taste delicious and get eaten. I am proud to be a part of Lathrop, which is dedicated to doing all it can to lessen its carbon footprint.

The next project the Lathrop Green Action Committee is taking on is the creation of a handbook appropriate for us to use, full of ideas that we can use to save the world. Don’t look for it in your mailbox tomorrow!

We need help! Share your ideas! Join our working Greenies! Contact Al Eipper or Lee Hawkins.

WATCH THE NEWS: The United Nations Climate Change Conference, December 6—15, 2009 in Copenhagen, Denmark.

What have you done today to halt climate change?

Installed a CFL?

Carried a cloth bag to the grocery?

Turned out the lights?

Bought local?

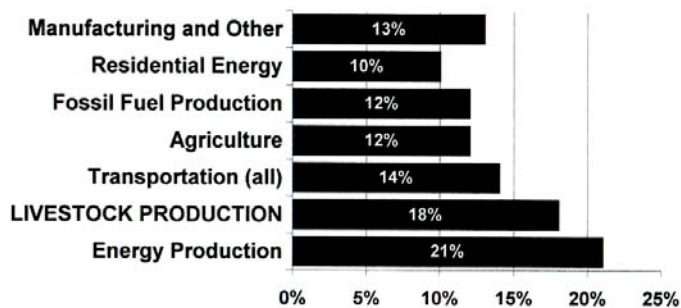


The Price of Meat

by Barbara Cavalieri

When people say the cost of meat is sky-high, they are not usually thinking of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. But the global warming they cause is one of the prices we are paying for a meat diet. Livestock production is second only to power plants as a cause of climate change.

GLOBAL CONTRIBUTIONS TO CLIMATE CHANGE (FAO data)



Climate change is not the only unwelcome concomitant of meat consumption; livestock manure is the major cause of water pollution in the US, according to the EPA, and livestock production is an important factor in global loss of biodiversity and land degradation. The relative environmental

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The Price of Meat (continued)

impacts of producing a non-meat diet are more benign:

| Production of | Relative Impacts of ... | | | | |
|---------------|-------------------------|---------------|-----------------|-----------------------------|----------------------------|
| | Global Warming | Air Pollution | Water Pollution | Alteration of Water Ecology | Alteration of Land Ecology |
| Pasta | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Poultry | 1.4 | 1.1 | 11.2 | 1.4 | 1.6 |
| Red Meat | 3.4 | 2.2 | 17.5 | 4.9 | 19.9 |

Dairy production is much less damaging than beef; pork and lamb fall between beef and chicken; potatoes are even better than pasta. A campaign for “Meatless Mondays,” a first effort to decrease the meat-inflicted damage, is underway in Britain.

Beef production is clearly the worst offender. Of its total worldwide greenhouse gas production: 32% comes directly from the cattle’s gases and other waste products, 28% from the fertilizer and fuel used in growing feed crops, and 40% from clearing of rain forests and other CO₂-absorbing plant cover in the developing world to produce food grains and grazing for beef cattle. Once cleared, tropical forest lands have very low productivity; consequently, farmers must continue to slash, burn, clear and move on. Each resulting hamburger corresponds to the loss of 55 more square feet of tropical rainforest, with all its valuable ecological assets.

Focusing on the Earth’s arable land now in use, 33% is engaged in livestock production. The minimum amount of farmland needed per person for acceptable nutrition is one hectare (2.5 acres), and the global average is now 1.8 hectares per person (although in the US we have 12 per person,

more than any other country). Although the amount of available farmland on Earth is increasing due to forest cutting, world population is growing still faster. Not far down the road, scarcity and hunger threaten. Meanwhile, the demand for meat is growing. To satisfy it, more than 1/3 of the world’s grain is now fed to animals—enough to feed a third of the human population.

In the US, the productivity of farmlands for plant crops is near the maximum limit. Farmland is being lost to urbanization and erosion, and the availability of water for irrigation is decreasing. Climate change is threatening to shift grain production farther north. The costs of food production are increasing, and the US population is expected to double before 2050. Can we continue to use 68% of US grain to fatten livestock? Enough grain to feed 800 million people.

When fed to cattle, 90% of the grain’s protein content is lost. One pound of beef is equivalent to 16 pounds of grain and 2500 gallons of water. Pigs utilize grain twice as efficiently as cows, chickens four times better, and fish still more so. The global fish catch, however, has exceeded a sustainable level and is in decline.

In addition to pollution and resource depletion, the factory farming practices that are so widespread today impose multiple direct burdens on human health (not to mention the animal cruelty inherent in the practices). Space precludes discussion of these problems here.

The true price of meat is not reflected in its dollar price—which is artificially low because the environmental costs have not been included. Instead, those costs have been left to be paid in the not-too-distant future by today’s children and their children. It would be wise for us to take on a small part of that burden now.

In the Libraries.... We regret that Dick Bauer, creator of our green libraries, has retired because of other responsibilities. We expect the column to continue , however.



From the News: Did you know?

By Joan Wofford

Cities and water agencies in some Western states, including Nevada, New Mexico, and Arizona, give residents rebates for tearing out grass and replacing it with drought-tolerant plants. The new ethos aims to do away with the broad-lawn-and-picket-fence vision of suburban life that took hold in the 1950s and, for many Americans, remains the ideal. - (*Wall Street Journal*, Oct. 13, 2009)

Manufacturers and retailers are rolling out gadgets that help consumers make compost faster, more discreetly and, in some cases, with less of the “Yuck” factor. The move is coming as more cities are encouraging and even mandating that residents who don’t compost at home take time to divide their food and yard waste from other trash so it can be recycled elsewhere.

- (*Wall Street Journal*, Oct. 14, 2009)

ENERGY AUDIT ON TOWNHOME

This summer an energy audit was performed on a Northampton townhome by Bay State Gas Company. It was a thorough inspection of windows, doors, furnace and insulation. A test on the furnace revealed it was operating at 86% efficiency – quite good even at current standards. Doors and windows were tight. There is room for improvement on ceiling insulation, but there is a limit on the rate of return. The insulation is adequate. The auditor spotted one light fixture which was not a CFL – he corrected that deficiency at no charge. So altogether Lathrop passed this audit with flying colors. – Klaus Kroner

SOLAR AT LATHROP? ONE POSSIBILITY:



Members of the Green Committee have met with Dean Musser of Tangent Energy Solutions to consider ways of supporting alternate energy. One possibility might be to put a solar array atop the parking lot behind the Inn. There are still many questions to be answered, including any expense, but Lathrop continues to search for ways to improve its carbon footprint.

A CLOSING THOUGHT ... “Lasting change does not happen overnight. Lasting change happens in infinitesimal increments: A day, an hour, a minute, a heart-beat at a time” (Sarah Ban Breathnach)

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