

Train Wreck

By Lynn Cassidy

“Train wreck” is an expression many of us use for events or situations that go terribly awry. If you’ve ever seen pictures of an actual train accident, it features derailed and mangled train cars, scattered dead bodies, and damaged goods. I’d like for you to consider a parallel.

The political belief that there is no climate change or that climate change has nothing to do with human activity is pushing us closer to a train wreck every day. Some of the effects of global climate change already observed are: the shrinking of glaciers, ice on rivers and lakes breaking up earlier in the spring, plant and animal ranges shifting their locations, increases in weather effects such as more intense heat, more severe hurricanes and an increase in fires. Scientists have high confidence that global temperatures will continue to rise for decades to come, largely due to greenhouse gases. Predictions include: Sea level rise of 1-4 feet by 2100. (Scientists don’t rule out a rise as much as nine feet.) Imagine what this will do to our coastline cities and increased flooding. Imagine what the increase in long, hot droughts will have on crops and food supply.

In November, 2017, thirteen federal agencies unveiled an exhaustive scientific report that summarized data on climate changes observed and predicted. It also concluded that humans are the dominant cause of the global temperature rise. Scientists have determined that rising carbon emissions from cars and factories are the major cause of climate change. The Paris Climate Accord was a progressive step towards multi-national cooperation in reducing greenhouse gases. We all know the stance of the Trump Administration towards Climate Science. Thankfully, many of the US governors have created an alliance to continue to work on measures to reduce greenhouse gases and limit carbon emissions. Our own Governor Hickenlooper is part of this group. Limitations and change are always painful, but the specter of a climate “train wreck” is even more compelling. Many people who care about this issue are making small, but significant changes in lifestyle that can add up, like using alternative transportation, working closer to home or using a home office. We can and should support state efforts to reverse the effects of climate change.