

Where the plastic meets the road

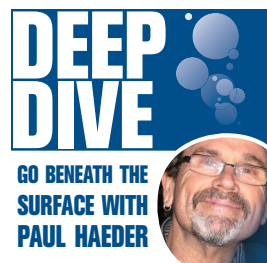
Continuously, discussions focusing on degraded ecosystems and tipping points forcing climate change to ramp up to chaos many times center around the “C” word.

Not “c” as in “cancer.”

“Capitalism is destroying the planet,” said Pat DeLaquil, an energy policy expert working with various governments, NGOs and the private sector to “help achieve economic development and combating climate change.”

He was one speaker in a two-guest gig at the Newport Public Library on Jan. 27 as part of the Citizens’ Climate Lobby and 350 Oregon Central Coast.

The other person presenting is director of a plastics-to-road recycling non-profit headquartered in Toledo.



Twenty people listened to DeLaquil as he zoomed through his data-filled PowerPoint. His SOP is working with the Oregon League of Conservation

Voters and other

groups to lobby for passage of a new version of climate change policy during this state’s short legislative session.

No matter how many details behind the framework of HB 2020 are aired, convincing Oregonians of all stripes to get behind this cap on statewide carbon emissions is a technical, legal, intellectual, PR and emotional challenge.

Two Newport City Council members attended Monday, as gale-force winds buffeted the library. Interestingly, kicking off the double header was a video clip from a Jan. 13 meeting of the state senate’s National Resources and Environment Committee.

In a droll voice, Sen. Arnold L. “Arnie” Roblan stated how he has visited all parts of Oregon listening to youth. He emphasized it has been 16 years since he was a school principal, but now he’s seeing like never before a huge shift in how PK12 students are viewing the world.

“There’s been a big change,” Roblan

stated in the video. “Kids are extremely anxious about the climate.”

Kicking off the two-hour event was Bill Kucha, Otter Rock artist and head of 350 Oregon Central Coast. He strummed guitar and sang his song, “There’s Music All Around Me.” The message is one of hope in a world with thousands of ecosystems collapsing.

While Sen. Roblan stated the counties along the coast are at the “epicenter of ocean acidification and beach erosion caused by climate change,” one audience member, Michael Gaskill asked Pat DeLaquil if he gets frustrated with the increasingly watered-down environmental bills that get passed each year.

Gaskill was in attendance to listen to the speakers and to sign up guests interested in the congressional campaign of Hillsboro Democrat Mark Gamba, who’s vying for the 5th district position November.

Another audience member wanted immediate response to her comment that “capitalism is the problem hurting the poor” and was exasperated by the lack of social justice apparent in the discussions

The C word was bandied about much in DeLaquil’s opening remarks:

“What drives capitalism to extremes? Two things: this hyper-individualism of the Ayn Rand economic school, which purports everyone is unique and must fight for himself or herself to acquire as much as possible. And, two, patriarchy which indoctrinates young children into believing this hierarchy of male control. This belief that males are not caring about social issues, the environment, and females are not supposed to speak their minds when confronted with this apparent destructive system.”

The dichotomy is common in discussions about male domination in business, industry, militarism and monetizing seemingly every single human transaction. Women, on the other hand, are seen “only” as mothers, nurturers put on Earth to support the family and keep the peace by not speaking out against environmental, cultural and community degradation and destruction.

DeLaquil carried that allusion further, saying capitalism and socialism can be reformed to support a clean, safe, market-



centered society with social safety nets like education, health care and other entitlement programs that are part and parcel of social democratic countries like Norway or Denmark.

Don Quixote fighting the plastics monster

“The window is closing faster on plastics than climate change, I really believe,” Scott Rosin of Plastic Up-Cycling told the gathering.

Knowing Rosin from Surfrider beach clean ups, and for an upcoming Deep Dive column, I don’t see him as Chicken Little “the sky is falling” fellow.

He has fought forest fires in the 1970s and ‘80s. He has been high up in the trees as a forester, and he knows the value of hard work — taking down entire stands of forest in for many years as an area logger.

He and his co-lead, Katharine Valentino, are looking for partnerships and financial backing for their project to get most of Lincoln County’s plastic waste stream into our roads in the form of new thoroughfares, repaved ones, potholes, driveways and parking lots.

The stats on the ground and in the water are staggering: “Think about it,” he said. “Predictions of a billion tons of plastic produced each year by 2025. Compare that to 1.5 million pounds produced in 1950.”

He went on to punctuate this staggering stat: “Predictions about current rates of plastic waste state by 2050 there will be more plastic in the ocean than fish.”

As a surfer and lover of the ocean, Scott

reminded the audience every time they read about a whale beached and dead, guts filled with plastic, that mammal represents less than 10 percent of the actual death rate of whales, since most die offshore and sink to the benthic zone.

Rosin and Valentino see innovators in Scotland and in California, as well as other places, coming to the rescue. TechniSoil out of Redding, California, is taking recycled plastic, bitumen, asphalt substrate and integrating it into a flexible and long-lasting paving mixture (up to 15 percent of the total volume for paving roads could be plastic).

Then there is MacRebur and Scottish CEO Toby McCartney who was working in Southern India helping people at landfills gather potentially reusable items and sell them. Scott Rosin tells us McCartney observed some of the plastics the pickers culled, putting it into potholes and setting it on fire.

Instant melted plasticize pothole filler.

“Not the most environmentally friendly way to fill potholes,” Scott said. “However, those plastic-filled potholes outlasted the actual roads.”

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Paul Haeder is a writer living and working in Lincoln County. He has two books coming out, one a short story collection, “Wide Open Eyes: Surfacing from Vietnam,” and a non-fiction book, “No More Messing Around: The Good, Bad and Ugly of America’s Education System.”