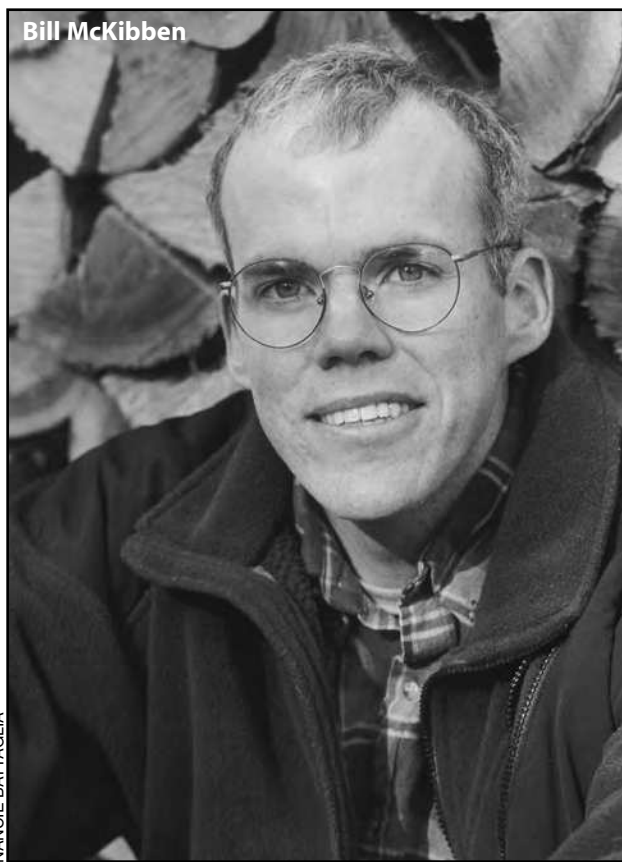


Bill McKibben

NANCIE BATTAGLIA



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cuts under way fast — 10 percent in just the next few years. Markets will help — if we send them the information that carbon carries a cost. Only government can do that.

Two more numbers we're pushing for: zero, which is how many new coal-fired power plants we can afford to open in America, and five million, which is how many green jobs Congress needs to provide for the country's low-skilled workers. All that insulation isn't going to stuff itself inside our walls, and those solar panels won't crawl up on the roofs by themselves. You can't send the work to China, and you can't do it with a mouse. This is the last big chance to build an economy that works for most of us.

Internationally, the task is even steeper. The Kyoto Accord, which we ignored, expires in a couple of years. Negotiations begin this month in Bali to strike a new deal, and it's likely to be the last bite at the apple we'll get — miss this chance and the climate likely spirals out of control. We have a number here, too: 450, as in parts-per-million carbon dioxide. It's the absolute upper limit on what we can pour into the atmosphere, and it will take a heroic effort to keep from exceeding it. This is a big change — even 10 years ago, we thought the safe level might be 550. But the data is so clear: The Earth is far more finely balanced than we thought, and our peril much greater. Our foremost climate scientist, NASA's James Hansen, testified under oath in a courtroom last year that if we didn't stop short of that 450 red line, we could see the sea level rise 20 feet before the century was out. That's civilization-challenging. That's a carbon summer to match any nuclear winter that anyone ever dreamed about.

It's a test, a kind of final exam for our political, economic and spiritual systems. And it's a fair test, nothing vague or fuzzy about it. Chemistry and physics don't bargain. They don't compromise. They don't meet us halfway. We'll do it or we won't. And 10 years from now, we'll know which path we chose.

Bill McKibben, a scholar in residence at Middlebury College, is an author and environmentalist who frequently writes about global warming. McKibben's essay was commissioned by the Association of Alternative Newsweeklies. Approximately 30 AAN member papers are publishing the essay this week.

KYOTO ACCORDINGLY

Environmentalists weigh in on the Kyoto Protocol

By Sena Christian, SN&R

Ross Gelbspan

Author, *The Heat is On* and *Boiling Point*, www.heatisonline.org

What is needed is a new Kyoto Protocol that reflects the urgency and magnitude of the challenge: a rapid global transition to non-carbon energy sources in the next 30 years. One approach might involve three elements: In industrial countries, withdraw the roughly \$250 billion a year in subsidies for coal and oil and put those same subsidies behind clean-energy sources. Create a fund, estimated at about \$300 billion a year, to transfer clean energy to developing countries. All developing countries would love to go solar, but most can't afford it. The fund could be financed by a tax on international air travel, carbon taxes in the north or a tiny tax of a quarter-penny per dollar on international currency transactions. Develop a regulatory mechanism that would require every country, starting at its current baseline, to increase its fossil-fuel efficiency by 5 percent per year. That means every country would produce the same amount next year with 5 percent less carbon fuel or produce 5 percent more with the same amount of carbon fuel. Since few economies grow at 5 percent for very long, emissions reductions would outpace long-term economic growth (for details, see "Solutions" at www.heatisonline.org.)

To incorporate these mechanisms would generate millions of new jobs, especially in developing countries. It would begin to turn impoverished nations into trading partners. It would jump start the renewable-energy industry into being a central driving engine of growth for the global economy.

Ted Nordhaus & Michael Shellenberger

Co-authors, *Break Through: From The Death of Environmentalism to the Politics of Possibility*

Kyoto failed for reasons having nothing to do with the absence of U.S. involvement. The developed nations that ratified the agreement saw their emissions go up, not down, by 4 percent between 2000 and 2004. Even if Kyoto was perfectly implemented, the emissions reduced would be one-seventh the amount of the emissions China alone will produce over the next three decades.

Kyoto was based on the wrong models of past efforts to regulate pollution. A better model is the creation of the European Union after World War II through shared investments in coal and steel. A post-Kyoto effort should bring down the price of clean energy as quickly as possible through massive public-private investments into technology innovation and infrastructure. Together the U.S., Europe and Japan should invest \$100-200 billion per year, which could stimulate \$60-120 billion in private capital. This commitment would bring down the price of clean energy while strengthening economic ties between these countries. To achieve this politically, the next president must sell the agenda as the only way to free ourselves from oil while establishing American leadership and creating jobs in the fast-growing and high-tech clean-energy markets.

Sarah Susanka

Architect and author, *The Not So Big House* series and *The Not So Big Life*, www.ntsobig.com

As someone who has done a significant amount of inner work, as well as work in the world of architecture and design, I'm very much aware that things are not what they appear to be. We see the world as something outside ourselves that needs to be fixed. Yet when we listen to the words of mystics and sages of all ages, and when we study the findings of today's scientists, we come to understand that there is in fact no separation between our individual human bodies and the world. We are all interconnected and part of one extraordinary movement of consciousness. What's more, the part and the whole mirror one another. So to change the world, we must truly do what Mahatma Gandhi said: "We must be the change we wish to see in the world."

As long as we focus on a world separate from ourselves and try to fix it without attending to our own individual imbalance, planetary balance will continue to elude us. So, although I believe that Kyoto signifies a very important recognition of the role we play collectively, we have yet to see that it is our individual role in becoming ever more present and aware in our own lives. That holds the key to the shift we are seeking.

Aaron Lehmer

Program manager, green-collar jobs campaign, Ella Baker Center for Human Rights, www.ellabakercenter.org

Since the Kyoto Protocol was first introduced in 1997,

consciousness has exploded around the urgent need to tackle the global climate crisis. At the Ella Baker Center, we've forged partnerships with groups serving low-income communities and green businesses that are moving away from the pollution-based economy of the past and toward a clean-energy economy. In collaboration with the city of Oakland and the Apollo Alliance, we initiated the Oakland Green Jobs Corps to train low-income residents to weatherize our buildings, switch out inefficient technologies and install the solar panels and wind farms that we'll need to power our future.

We can and must fight both poverty and pollution at the same time by preparing those who have been left out of previous economic booms for promising careers in the emerging green economy. The task at hand is enormous and urgent: The twin threats of climate change and oil dependence demand that we must take bold action now to move our communities away from fossil fuels and toward renewable energy solutions.

We know that this will require millions of people rolling up their sleeves to literally transform the way we work, live and play. This means that billions of dollars of new investment in our cities will be needed. This is a historic opportunity to both protect our climate and also uplift our communities, providing dignified, green opportunities for all.

Jeff McIntire-Strasburg

Senior editor, www.GreenOptions.com; founder, www.Sustainablog.org

It's tempting to focus on the fact that the U.S. government still hasn't signed on to the Kyoto Protocols, and thus conclude that we haven't made much progress. Despite the federal government's very slow movement on the issue, though, I think we've come quite far. Ten years ago, few would have imagined that a Republican governor would sign off on the first greenhouse-gas emissions reduction program for his state, or that companies like Wal-Mart, Duke Energy and General Electric would be lobbying Congress for regulation of carbon emissions.

We've got much farther to go, but I'm optimistic that the United States will fully join the international effort to combat global climate change. The general public, the business community and state and local governments "get it." It's hard to imagine that the next U.S. president and Congress will be able to not act decisively without paying a heavy political price.

Brian Nowicki

California climate policy director, Center for Biological Diversity, www.biologicaldiversity.org

When the Kyoto Protocol was initiated 10 years ago, there was good reason to be seriously concerned about the impacts of climate change on the world's ecosystems. Since then, science has provided increasingly specific and disturbing projections, and we have started seeing the impacts to the world's wildlife and habitats. The decline in the Arctic sea ice is directly impairing the ability of polar bears to hunt. Pikas adapted to high mountain weather are losing lower elevation populations. Checkerspot butterflies along the U.S. Pacific Coast are losing southern populations. A wide array of plants and animals are facing the stresses that come from earlier springs, more hot days and seasonal droughts. In the past 10 years, it has become increasingly clear that global climate change not only threatens a wide array of plants and wildlife, but also threatens the integrity of entire ecosystems. If the world's biological diversity is to survive the next 100 years, we not only need to make every effort to avoid the worst impacts of climate change, we also need to take serious measures to protect species and ecosystems from the continued warming we have already committed to.

Faiz Shakir

Research director, Center for American Progress, www.americanprogress.org

In the years since Kyoto, the public cries for taking action to regulate carbon-dioxide emissions are now deafening. To respond to the climate crisis and transform our energy economy, we need presidential leadership to curb this nation's oil usage, cap and cut carbon-dioxide emissions, and increase investment in renewable energy. While the Bush administration dithers and delays, leadership in addressing this looming disaster has emerged from two dozen U.S. states and the European Union.